

PROJECT ABSTRACT

Master of Arts in Pastoral Theology

Adventist University of Africa

Theological Seminary

Title: A STRATEGY FOR RESOLVING CHURCH CONFLICT: A CASE STUDY OF DANDORA TERMINUS SDA CHURCH, CENTRAL KENYA CONFERENCE

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The church of Christ exists to reach the world for Him. The church is to be successful in her mission when her members are united. To this end Jesus prayed that her member would be united (John 17:2) just as He, God the Son, the Father and the Holy Spirit are united. Jesus also said in John 13:35 that “By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.” Jesus pointed out that the church members genuine love to each other does led to harvest of souls.¹ However, these desirable virtues are not automatically available at Dandora Terminus SDA Church. The opposite of love, which is hate and conflict instead of unity, has been the experience between opposing sides of her members.

¹Leslie B. Flynn, *Great Church Fights: What the Bible Says About Controversy and How to Resolve It* (Wheaton, Il: Victor Books, 1977), 26.

After an in-depth study on Conflict resolution from various literatures, the researcher developed a strategy which brought together member of the opposing sides, member not on any of the opposing side and leaders of Dandora Terminus SDA church to resolve a conflict that had been a problem in the church for a long time. This was done by carrying out a survey and interviews and questionnaire exercise to confirm the existence of the conflict and its impact. An eight days conflict resolution seminar and workshops were conducted to equip the participants with skill of conflict resolution. Following, were meetings of conflict resolution itself, first the researcher beginning with meetings with the opposing sides separately to allow each opposing side to build confidence with him. Then the problem, according each side, stating meeting followed, then the problem causing conflict as agreed upon by both side meeting, then resolving of each problem at a time meeting. Finally was the Confessions, repentance and commitment meeting. At the end of these actual conflict resolution meetings, the conflict was resolved.

Evaluation of this project was carried out in six month and in those six month the members who had been inactive became active. They had been inactive in disgust of the fact that their opponents were the ones now in the leadership and especially because of the manner in which they had accented to it. They became active and even reactivated their singing group which had earlier been the church choir but which had since ceased to be. The reactivated singing group was 92% of the members on that side of the opposing parties. Before the conflict resolution, these opposing sides were bitter and critics of each other. After the conflict resolution the formerly opposing side began working together. The opposing party which was in leadership and which was showing off to the opposing side and would talk them quiet, dropped show offs and

became kind and accommodative to the former offending side. More of how the conflict resolved is explained by the researcher in chapter five.

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CENTRAL KENYA CONFERENCE

A project
presented in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree
Master of Arts in Pastoral Theology

by
Jacob Achewa Akali

June 2015

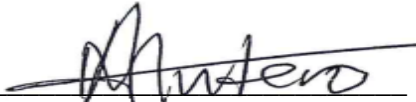
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To church leaders and members

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Jesus prayed, in his intercessory prayer before his ascension, that the church should be one, that her members may be one, united and a community just as Christ is one and united with God the Father and God the Holy Spirit.

And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me (John 17:22-23).

This desirable virtue of unity, oneness and being a community¹ is usually not automatically available, especially where it is expected to be like in church. The opposite of unity, that is, conflict seem to pop its ugly head more often than not. When a church suffers conflict between her members or the members and their pastor, not only does the conflict retard her development and progress but also her individual member may suffer from negative stress, stress related disorders and lifetime health problem. It follows therefore that when conflict arise in a church, all efforts to resolve it and enhance unity need to be made. This project is such an effort.

Problem Statement

There is a serious conflict between two groups of the Dandora Terminus SDA church members. One of the groups comprise forty percent whereas the other comprises of thirty percent of the total membership of the church. The other thirty

¹Duncom Centre for Conflict Resolution, “Resolving Church Conflicts”, accessed 13 May 2014, <http://www.mediate.com/ccr/pg41.cfm>.

percent of the church membership belongs to neither of the two sides. This conflict has caused a division in the church, made church uncomfortable for members in either of the opposing groups and has also made church uncondusive for members who are not in either of the opposing groups .There is constant bitterness, animosity, disconnect, strife, and contentions between the opposing parties. The efficiency of this church's vision and mission is hindered by this conflict, "for a divided house cannot stand"(Luke 11:17).

The Seventh-day Adventist Church, Dandora Terminus conflict has manifested itself in various ways. In the last quarter of the year 2012, in the nominating committee during the Election of church officers for year 2013, there was contention over who would occupy what office in church. As the discussion to identify suitability of various members for whatever position in church they were proposed for went on, it occurred to the researcher that there were two opposing groups that had made up the nominating committee. Irreconcilability between them was so obvious in the patterns of voting. Members of each opposing party voted for or against in the same way. It was evident from their manner of their voting that one group was in control of the church and was ensuring that only people in their opposing party or their sympathizers were elected to positions of service in the church, especially key position in the church if not all positions. A similar thing had happened in the previous year(2011)'s election of the church officers of 2012, but the contention was not as severe.

The opposing party that had been in control of the church that year (2012) emerged successful. However in the course of the year 2013, it was evident that the two opposing parties were at logger heads and their differences disintegrated into maligning, blackmail and character assassination of the opposing parties and even

individuals in the opposing side. All this evil was in the name of each opposing parties' attempt to justify why the other needed not to be in the leadership of the church.

The conflict in the 2013 nominating committee for election of church offices for the year 2014 was more contentious. Members of the opposing parties in the church were both represented in the nominating committee and as you would expect the opposing party that was not in leadership of the church came determined to take control of the church leadership in the following year. The opposing party that was in control this additional year since the researcher became their pastor was determined to retain the church's leadership. This time the contention disintegrated into individuals of the nominating committee attacking personalities of the fellow nominating committee members in the alleged opposing side. The nominating committee members whose personality was attacked responded in counter personality attacks and the members just fell short of fist fight and instead the ladies among them resorted to crying. This nominating committee was discontinued for misconduct and another one was duly put in its place.

The new nominating committee successfully elected officers for 2014 but the conflict between the opposing parties has continued to rage on. A good size of members in each opposing party show such open hate of members in the opposing party that they do not greet each other as testified in appendix B, and even when they seemed to greet each other it isn't genuine, not heartfelt.

The Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to develop a strategy for conflict resolution of resolving the conflict at Seventh-day Adventist Church, Dandora Terminus. The research is to study and collect data on the signs, effect benefits, causes of conflict

and how to resolve it from the Bible, EGW writings, and other credible sources and design, implement and evaluate a strategy for resolving the conflict at Dandora Terminus SDA Church so that she can carry out her mission of nurturing her membership in Christ and getting her membership to evangelizing the world. The world is desperately in need of the gospel and only a church without dirty fights can proclaim it.

The Significance of the Study

Since the division in the Dandora Terminus SDA Church is subjecting her members to a lot of anxiety, despair and hopelessness, a solution to it is a great relief, source of encouragement, hope and an inspiration to victorious mission for which the church exists. The gains made by the strategy will be of use to many pastors, individual church members, group of persons within a church, churches and church organizations with a challenge of conflict in their midst.

Methodology

To get resource to use in resolving of the conflict among Dandora Terminus SDA Church members, Biblical exegesis and exposition will be employed for the biblical observation on the study.

Exegesis of all Bible texts on conflict and unity and exposition of the same for causes of conflict and foundation and or principles of unity will be used to design, implement, and evaluate a strategy to resolve the conflict.

To be consulted also for causes of conflicts and principle of unity to use in designing implementing and evaluation of a strategy to resolve the Dandora Terminus SDA Church conflict are: EGW Writings, SDA Church Manual, Seventh-day Adventist Church research Institute Resource, Current SDA Church Policy, SDA

Theological Journals, Ministry Magazine, Adventist Review Magazine, This Study Relevant and Credible Books, Journals, and Magazine, Interviews, Surveys, Questionnaires

Limitation

The research experienced some challenges. The neighbourhood of the research challenges rendered the conflict resolution meetings time tied on week days. There were challenges of respondents' ability to make it to conflict resolution meeting on time due to the evening city traffic jam after work on week days and respondents were unable to stay beyond 7.00pm due to the respondents' residence and even the church's neighbourhood insecurity at night. In order to take into perspective the obvious church's neighbourhood challenges to the meeting time the research and the conflict resolution meetings took a little more time and expenses than otherwise.

Quite a good number of residents of Dandora estate are self-employed and are small income earners and so were some respondents. Due to this some respondents missed some meetings to make their daily income.

The language of communication in Dandora Terminus SDA Church is Kiswahili, and this was a limiting fact in communicating part research materials; conflict resolution seminar materials, survey, questionnaire, interviews and testimonies.

Delimitation

There are many types of conflicts and conflict itself happens in very many places and circumstances. For instant, it is a point of conflict, when what we get in life doesn't match up with what we thought we wanted. It is also amazing that the fortune for anyone to reach the highest height of success in societal standards still

leave him unfulfilled; with upsets, frustrations, emptiness and irritability-in conflict with himself. However, for this study the researcher will focus on conflict in church, between church members groups and between individual church members and especially the conflict between members of Dandora Terminus SDA Church.

Definition of Terms

A few terms in this research that may require definition are:

Conflict: Conflict is the effect resulting from two or more objects trying to occupy the same space at the same time. The object could be a persons, groups or organizations. The space is their interrelatedness, where the interaction of their goal or intention takes place.

Antagonists: Are individuals who, on the basis of no substantive evidence go out of their way to make insatiable demands, usually attacking the person or performance of others. These attacks are selfish in nature, tearing down rather than building up, and are frequently directed against those in a leadership capacity. There are those who wantonly, selfishly and destructively attack others

Conflict proneness: Are circumstances or aspects of a church's life that are considered essential for survival of a people group, but predispose them to conflict.

Variant dynamics in church conflict:

This are certain temporarily or chronically aspects in a church or that happen to a church that each alone precipitate crisis and threaten its unity and even its very existence.

Survival response in conflict:

Is a normal human emotional, mental and physical
fighting strategies we resort to make sure that our side
wins in a conflict.

CHAPTER 2

THEORETICAL FOUNDATION OF THE STUDY

Conflict Definition

In the book resolving church conflict a case study approach for local congregations by G. Douglass Lewis, Lewis tells a story that illustrates a definition for conflict. When Laura, Lewis' daughter, was five years she loved to play with cardboard boxes. A big box would occupy her for hours. She would crawl into it, sit inside it, or hide under it. One day when a friend came to play, their activity centred on a modest-size box. After watching Laura sit in the box Josh naturally wanted to get in as well. He gave Laura a shove and she reciprocated. A shoving match followed. Soon they were hitting each other, screaming and crying. The escalation of conflict and noise level prompted Lewis to intervene and suggested some alternatives. The children listened and cooperated. They took turns – one sat in the box, the other rocked it to give an effect of carnival ride, and vice versa. Next, one hid somewhere in the room and the one in the box crawled out to search for the hidden one. Finally with some help from Lewis, both squeezed into the box together. This alternative brought great Joy. They finally learned to get into the box together without outside assistance, which pleased them even more.¹

¹Douglass G. Lewis, *Resolving Church Conflict: A Case Study Approach for Local Churches* (San Francisco, CA: Harper & Row, 1981), 4.

The word “Conflict” comes from the Latin word *fligere*, meaning “to strike.” Conflict means literally “to strike together.” Whenever two persons go after goals that they perceive to be mutually exclusive, whenever one person’s needs collide with another’s, a conflict results.¹

Conflict is the effect resulting from two or more objects trying to occupy the same space at the same time.² The object could be a persons, groups or organizations. The space is their interrelatedness, where the interaction of their goal or intention takes place. McSwain concludes it simply well that conflict is “a situation in which two or more human beings desire a goal which they perceive as being attainable by one or the other but not by both.”³

Signs of Conflict

There are many signs of a conflict in a church. For this research the researcher will mention but just two. When there is a conflict in a church an individual or a group of church members will avoiding certain issues or topic.⁴ In some case, especial when any hope of conflict resolution doesn’t seem to be forthcoming disgruntled members are encouraged to leave.

¹William H Willimon, *Preaching About Conflict in the Local Church* (Philadelphia, PA: The Westminster Press, 1986), 10.

²Lewis, 5.

³Larry L. McSwain and William C. Treadwell, Jr., *Conflict Ministry in the Church* (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1973), 25.

⁴Ibid. ,37.

Effects of Conflict

Many are the effects of conflict, distraction of cities, people left destitute, bloodshed.¹ While it is true that conflict effects can be positive or negative, it is usually the negative that is most witnessed. For instance, many believe that cancer which is a disease of the mind, body and spirit, is a negative effect of conflict. Others still observe that cancer is an outcome of conflict in that anger, unforgiving and bitterness, which come with conflict, puts the body into a stressful acidic environment making it susceptible to cancer. On the other hand a proactive, a positive spirit, a loving and forgiving spirit, relaxing and enjoying life will help the cancer warrior be a survivor² and very rewarding. Fitness of the Gospel being refuted on account of conflict in churches,³ is another effect of conflict. Conflict also leads to Church Split. Some conflicts are resultant from built up problems that reach a point where the pressure can no longer be contained, leading to church splits. At one time or another the pressure bursts and the result is a church split.⁴

Benefits of Conflicts

Speed Leas observes that tension isn't all bad⁵ and offers the following as benefits of conflicts. Issues get explored fully. Better decisions are made. People are committed to decision. He observes that unless those hearing a proposal are able to

¹Theo Tschuy, *Ethnic Conflict and Religion* (Geneva: WCCPublications, 1997) x, 7, 13, 21, 80, 126.

²McSwain, 25.

³Kihiko Moses Kibe, *Resolving church Splits* (Nairobi, Kenya: King's Script Publishing, 2004) 10.

⁴Ibid, 9.

⁵Edward G. Dobson, *Mastering Conflict* (Portland, OR: Multnomah Press, 1992), 29.

ask questions (serious questions and raise objections (sometimes serious objections) they are not likely to commit themselves to the decision finally made. Kazakevičiūė, say that, good teams generally go through a storming stage that, if negotiated appropriately, leads to a more satisfactory and productive outcome or product.¹ Conflict breeds vitality; it involves the application of the intellect to the social, religious and ethical realities of our world; conflict which envelops us, surrounds us as the air we breathe, must be faced; indeed, in facing conflict we involve the force of life. It is in this facing, this confrontation, with all of its difficult and ambiguity, that we experience not only the weariness and the frustration but also the richness of living and achieving.²

Reality of Conflict among God's People

Because the church draws its instruction from the word of God, the Bible, it will be quite in order to begin to look at the occurrences of conflict among the people of God as early as in the Old Testament of the Bible.

Yes conflict in church can be a disturbing aspect. But one asks, is this conflict thing only limited to the current God's people, the church today? Well conflict has always been, even among God's people.

The Bible lets us know that the very first conflict happened in heaven, between Michael (Christ) and the Lucifer (Satan) which resulted from Lucifer's dissatisfaction

¹KazakevičiūėAdierian (2013), "Lifestyle and Conflict Resolution Strategies in a Lithuanian Organization" *Journal of Individual Psychology*, Summer, Vol. 69 Issue 2, 156-167.accessed 17 September 2014 <http://connection.ebscohost.com/c/articles/91690395/adlerian-lifestyle-conflict-resolution-strategies-lithuanian-organization>.

²Henry J Stob, *Seeking Understanding* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans , 2001), 349, 350.

with his position in heaven and coveting God the Father's place and began to strive for it (Rev.12:7-12):

And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, And prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven. And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him. And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night. And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death. Therefore rejoice, ye heavens, and ye that dwell in them. Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea! For the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time.

Old Testament

That conflict that began in heaven found its way here on earth and has always been. In Gen. 13:7-12 we find a case of conflict and division:

And there was a strife between the herdsmen of Abram's cattle and the herdsmen of Lot's cattle...

This conflict was not only destructive to these herdsmen, but also had the potential to put Abram and Lot into strife as well. Abram solved this conflict between his and Lot's servant by simply humbling himself. Though he was Lot's uncle and elderly to him he offered his nephew priority of choice.

In Gen. 16:5-9 we find another case of conflict:

And Sarai said unto Abram, My wrong be upon thee: I have given my maid into thy bosom; and when she saw that she had conceived, I was despised in her eyes: the LORD judge between me and thee. But Abram said unto Sarai, Behold, thy maid is in thy hand; do to her as it pleaseth thee. And when Sarai dealt hardly with her, she fled from her face. And the angel of the LORD found her by a fountain of water in the wilderness, by the fountain in the way to Shur. And he said, Hagar, Sarai's maid, whence camest thou? and whither wilt thou go? And she said, I flee from the face of my mistress Sarai. And the angel of the LORD said unto her, Return to thy mistress, and submit thyself under her hands.

Sarah and Hagar's strife emanated from Hagar's insubordination of Sarah on account of feeling more advantaged than Sarah her mistress. Hagar is elated because she had conceived whereas Sarah wouldn't. She became proud and rebellious hence the conflict.

New Testament

In the book 'Great Church Fights' is a good illustration story of what the Christian Church has been going through in regard to conflict.

Two porcupines in Northern Canada huddled together to get warm, according to a forest folk tale. But their quills pricked each other and they moved apart. Before long they were shivering and they sidled closer again. New scene; same ending. They needed each other, but they kept needling each other.¹

The Christian Church through centuries has been like these porcupine, it has always had a mix of both communion and conflicts. Despite the halo of spirituality imagined over the apostolic church, the dust clouds of sharp collisions were equally visible. There were Paul's disputes with Barnabas, cliques' clashes at Corinth, women contentions at Philippi and many more.²

As far as the Christian Church is concerned, conflict has been a problem God's Church has had to struggle with through her history. Right from the first Christian Church, the apostolic church, there has always been conflicts in the church.

First there was the conflict in the apostolic church over alleged favouritism of Palestinian widows over Grecian ones in the distribution of help to the needy

¹Flynn, 9.

²Ibid.

members of the church. If this conflict was not handled well it had potential to destroy the young church.

There was the conflict in the church at Antioch. And certain men which came down from Judaea taught the brethren, and said, except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved. When therefore Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and disputation with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas, and certain other of them, should go up to Jerusalem unto the apostles and elders about this question (Acts 15:1-2). This church is where the Christians were first called Christians because of their being like Christ:

And when he (Barnabas) had found him (Paul), he brought him unto Antioch. And it came to pass, that a whole year they assembled themselves with the church, and taught much people. And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch(Acts 11:26).

Just how conflict sneaked into this otherwise lovely church is testimony that the challenge of conflict in a local church today is not a problem just limited to today's church only. However it needs to be resolved when it does occur.

In 1 Corinthians 1:1, Paul noted that it hath been declared unto me of you, my brethren, by them which are of the house of Chloe, that there are contentions among you.

Here Paul confirms his struggle with the problem of conflict in the churches he had been involved in finding. Indeed, conflict is such an old problem even in the family of Gods children.

Paul could not accommodate conflicts amidst brethren. In Philippians 4:2 he counsels: I beseech Euodias, and beseech Syntyche, that they be of the same mind in the Lord.

Commenting on this text Barnes says:

It has been commonly supposed that Eudias and Syntyche were deaconesses, who preached the gospel to those of their own sex; but there is no certain evidence of this. All that is known is, that there was some disagreement between them, and the apostle entreats them to be reconciled to each other. That they be of the same mind. That they be united, or reconciled. Whether the difference is related to doctrine, or to something else, we cannot determine from this phrase. The language is such as would properly relate to any difference.

In the Lord. In their Christian walk and plans. They were doubtless professing Christians, and the apostle exhorts them to make the Lord the great object of their affections, and, in their regard for him, to bury all their petty differences and animosities.¹

The unwavering position of Paul for believers is that divisions causing conflicts need not be in their midst at all.

Conflict in the Church in the Contemporary Settings

Instances of conflict and divisions in the church in the contemporary settings have been many and the causes for the same are numerous and diverse in nature. One case among many is in more recent years, that is, in the 60s, 70s and even in the 80s. The tension in the church in this period was out of need for renewal. The church of God, all through its long and challenging history has been in need of renewal. It will continue to be in need of it until Christ returns. But renewal has always been a painful thing. It does cause tears. It can also cause conflict in the church. Instead of healing the wounds in the body of Christ it can rub salt in them and cause more splits. Though this is inevitable, it doesn't have to be.

Now the Church of Christ in that said period had its fair share of tension points. In the 60s and the 70s many people experienced a new work of the Holy Spirit in their lives. There was a quickening of the spiritual tempo. During 60s and 70s the

¹Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes on the New Testament* (London: Blackie and Son, 1884-85), 212.

tension was about the experience of the Holy Spirit. The point in question was: is there not a post-baptism or post-conversion experience called “the baptism in the Holy Spirit”? This brought problems to the churches all over the world, by the 80s Christians had to come to live with one another in spite of their differences that emerged in 60s and 70s. The new point, however in 80s was about the church other than the Christian experience. In early 80s splits between churches and within churches became more common. The issue was about the church. Some began to believe and say that the old denominational churches at best could only expect superficial renewal. If one wanted all that God wanted, one would have to find it in a new “House churches”, independent fellowships free from denominational restraints. Some went as far as to teach that this was the only obedient course for Christians to follow.¹ The conflict in Dandora Terminus SDA Church is definitely not the first one.

Kale and McCullough in their book *Managing Conflict in Church* observe that conflict is a normal part of all human organizations including the church.² In fact they insist that contrary to popular opinion, conflict is not a sign of a weak church, weak church leadership, or even a need for spiritual renewal. And conflict isn't necessarily a sign that a church has spiritual problems. As a matter of fact, it can be a sign that normal health growth is—including spiritual growth—is taking place.

It could be argued that a pastor or lay leader should be concerned if his or her church is completely conflict free. That could mean that instead of new growth occurring, the old ways of doing things are going unchallenged and that new ideas are

¹Michael Harper, *That We May Be One* (South Plainfield, N.J: Bridge Publications, 1983), 8.

²David W. Kale and Mel McCullough, *Managing Conflict in the Church* (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill Press, 1995), 29.

not part of the church process. Then if new members bring with them new ideas, those new ideas can be seen as challenges by those in power, and conflict is born.

Parson and Leas go as far as taking the position that healthy churches create tension. It is their opinion that tension helps churches stay flexible and ready to change. They believe that if a church lacks the ability to change, it will get stuck in a rut and begin to decline. As new people come, if the church fails to adjust to meet their needs, the new comers will walk in through the front door and right out through the back door.¹

Tension in the church not only keeps the church flexible but also can help keep the leader and membership current on their problem solving skills. With fresh problems presenting themselves regularly, members learn to identify problems quickly and are able to work together to solve them. When their needs are met, people are at home in the church family and the Lord's kingdom is advanced. Kale observes that, if a church is stuck in the rut of doing the same thing in the same way and spearheaded by the same people no healthy tension is created to stretch its leaders in ways that can meet today's needs.

It follows therefore that conflict brought about by need to make things better is in itself good but that is if the conflict will be well resolved. To this effect Kale notes that Rick Ryding, a professor of Christian education at Mount Vernon Nazarene University is right in saying that the last words the church should ever say are; "We've never done it that way before."²

¹Lott B. David, ed., *Conflict Management in Congregations* (Bethesda, MD: The Alban Institute, 1998), 64.

²Kale, 30.

Before we get into how we can resolved conflict, we need to consider what the causes of conflict are. The causes of conflict discoursed next are not limited to these ones only but this are the most, prevalent and disturbing in a church setting.

Causes of Conflicts

Pride and Rebellion

In his book, resolving church splits, Kibe tell the story of Pastor Jones posting to a church where he realized he was more educated than anyone else.¹When the feelings of loftiness engender the heart of man, his next possible action is to put in jeopardy any relationship that is dear to him. In his self-promotion and magnification, like Lucifer, his pride brings conflict and pain. Pride and rebellion² have broken many relationships, both divine and human.³

People would wonder whether those in church have accepted the lord and are cured of all pride and rebellion. Ideally, this should be the position, Kibe observes and I agree with him, however, man is inclined to evil than to good. Our humanness is still with us even when we accept Christ. The book of Galatians urges us to live by the Spirit so that we cannot gratify the sinful desire of the flesh (Gal. 5:1): “Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.”

It continues to say in verse 17 that:

¹Kibe, 9.

² “How should conflict in the church be handled?” accessed 13 November 2014 <http://www.gotquestions.org/Church-Conflict.html>.

³Kibe, 10.

For the sinful nature is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit is contrary to the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.

Kibe concludes that this portent war in a believer may lead him to do evil rather than good. The fact that one is a church member or professes Christianity does not mean he cannot fall into temptation of pride and rebellion, which is part of his sinful nature. That is why we are encouraged by the scripture to live by the Spirit.¹ Prov. 17:11 says: “An evil man seeketh only rebellion...

The scripture also in Prov. 13:10 observes that contention or conflicts are brought about by pride: Only by pride cometh contention: but with the well advised is wisdom. In Prov. 28:25, the word of God adds: He that is of a proud heart stirreth up strife: but he that putteth his trust in the LORD shall be made fat.

In 1 Kg. 12:1-16, King Rehoboam was this kind of leader and his pride and rebellion led to a conflict in his kingdom and eventually 10 of the ten tribes of Israel freed themselves from his reign to form the northern kingdom, Israel, while he remained king of the southern kingdom, Judah. Other biblical references of pride and rebellion as causes of conflict include: the fall of Lucifer (Ezek. 28:14-17 and Is 14:12-15).

Anyone who has the seed of pride is likely to lust for position and power and is likely to have a drive in him, powerful enough to fight and rebel against any power and authority established in church. This give rise to a conflict in church. If that is one of the members of the church he will begin looking for any little mistakes in the church's leadership to justify his rebelliousness. Kibe observes that, if that is an assistant pastor eyeing the senior pastor's position he will start looking for any little

¹Ibid. , 10.

weakness on the part of the senior pastor. He will start circulating rumours that the pastor has lost his anointing or has sinned. He will use any reason that would sound credible enough to justify his rebellion and win a number of faithful sympathizers to him.¹

Antagonist is another cause of conflict in churches. Antagonist according to Haugk, are:

Individuals who, on the basis of no substantive evidence go out of their way to make insatiable demands, usually attacking the person or performance of others. These attacks are selfish in nature, tearing down rather than building up, and are frequently directed against those in a leadership capacity.² There are those who wantonly, selfishly and destructively attack others.³

The antagonist implicit goal is control, no matter what the cost may be to others,⁴ observes Haugk and adds that:

Show me a divided and strife-torn congregation and I will show you a congregation that has one or more antagonist in its midst.⁵

Korah, Dathan and Abiram were antagonistic to Moses' leadership (Num 16:1-36)

Antagonist's caused conflicts cannot be resolved simplistically.

Haugk observes that:

Some specialists in the field of conflict resolution are now discovering that they have treated conflict too narrowly. Too often it was assumed that all parties involved in conflicts were mentally healthy, morally responsible, rational and willing to compromise. Experience has shown that such assumptions, while applying to the great majority of individuals, overlook a very notable, vocal and disruptive minority. The result has been to equip

¹Ibid, 10.

²Kenneth C. Haugk, *Antagonists in the Church: How to Identify and Deal With Destructive Conflict* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Publishing house, 1988), 22, 23.

³Ibid. , 21.

⁴Ibid. , 27.

⁵Ibid.

mentally sound and morally responsible individuals to work through healthy conflict with other mentally sound and morally responsible people, but to leave them lost when at a confrontation with antagonists.

There are hard-core, major and moderate antagonist.

Haugk explains the 3 antagonists as follows:

Hard-Core Antagonists. Hard-core antagonists are seriously disturbed individuals. They are psychotic – they are out of reality. Their psychosis is almost always of the paranoid variety, which by nature is not as easy to detect as other psychoses. Many paranoid individuals can appear normal some (or even most) of the time.

Haugk say that Hard-core antagonists tend to have incredible tenacity and unbelievable desire to make trouble, and demonstrates this observation in the story in which he says that:

For a number of years Reverend Smith served a congregation in Oklahoma. During that time an antagonist launched a vicious attack against him. Fortunately the situation was handled well, and the antagonist left the congregation after inflicting only minimal damage. After serving the congregation for 15 years, Reverend Smith received an opportunity to move to a church in California. He decided to make the move, and felt good about it. His installation in the new congregation was festive. A spirit of celebration marked the special afternoon service, attended by well over 1000 people. Following the service and after some picture taking, the new minister and the presiding clergy moved from the church toward a fellowship hall downstairs. As the pastor walked down the stairs he paused for a moment and looked out over the large group of people milling around waiting for the fellowship to begin. Two people got his eye. The Oklahoma antagonist and his wife had travelled more than 1500 miles to attend the installation in order to sow discrediting rumours about the new minister.¹

Haugk notes that such is the persistence of some antagonists. This true story demonstrates the extremes to which a hard-core antagonist is willing to go. He further says that it shows how it is so essential to deal with antagonists. Haugk suggests that

¹Ibid., 27-28.

hard-core antagonists may have been the type of people the apostle Paul had in mind when he warned the leaders of the congregation in Ephesus:

Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he has purchased with his own blood. For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock (Acts 20:28-29).¹

Major Antagonists. Discussing these type of antagonists, Haugk explains that Major antagonists are not as disturbed as the hard-core antagonists, yet at times exhibit similar behaviours. He explains further that, whereas hard-core antagonists cannot be reasoned with because they lack emotional stability to understand, major antagonists refuse to be reasoned with. Major antagonists possess the capability to reason with their opponents but decline to exercise it. And that the demands of major antagonists, also, are insatiable.

Haugk observes further that diagnostically, major antagonist have a character or personality disorder. They carry a great deal of hostility, coupled with an overwhelming drive for power. Although they are not psychotic, their personality problems are most certainly deep-seated, yet they are not out of touch with reality. Major antagonists are not neurotic; neurotics experience anxiety, possibly guilt, and a great deal of dissatisfaction with their problems, and have a desire to change. Major antagonists do not.²

Moderate Antagonists. About moderate antagonists, Haugk says, two features distinguish the *moderate antagonist* from the first two. He explains that first, a moderate antagonist lacks the self-stating quality of the others. Haugk notes that if

¹Ibid., 28.

²Ibid.,28-29.

you were walking on one side of a street and an antagonist of either of the first two types were on the other, he or she would gladly walk across the street to give you trouble. Moderate antagonists would not go so far out of their way. If you both were walking on same side of the street, however, the moderate antagonist would take advantage of the opportunity to make trouble for you. In other words, an opportunity must be presented more clearly or closely to a moderate antagonist before he or she becomes actively antagonistic.

Secondly Haugk says that, moderate antagonists lack the perseverance of the others. No moderate antagonist would show up years later in California-unlike major and hard-core antagonists. Moderate antagonists have personality problems but their problems are not as severe as those of the hard-core and the major antagonists. They do make good followers of the hard-core and major antagonists.

Antagonists of all the three types are malevolent in both intent and effect. Haugk observe that one will have no trouble distinguishing antagonists from *activists*, who are devoted to causes of some sort and pushes for change in the society's thinking and behaviour. Even if you happen to disagree with the substance of a cause promoted by an activist, it will be evident that they are committed to the issue. They really care. They want action, no doubt, they are issue oriented, not person –oriented. They do not at all fit into the preceding definition of an antagonist, nor do they fit in any of the three types.

It should be noted, Haugk says, that everyone acts antagonistically at times. There are times when everyone acts selfishly, destructive, or perhaps even maliciously. Without excusing such behaviours, you can be sure of this: that isolated antagonistic behaviour does not make an antagonist.

The point that deduced from this discussion is that the emotional instability and moral unsoundness of those got in a conflict demand that the conflicts solving process be not limited only to rational methods. Some people involved in conflict are not mentally healthy, morally responsible to be reasoned with.¹

Exposed Sin or Wrong

Exposure of sin or wrong in a church member's life is another reason for church conflict.² To own up to sin is not easy sometimes. When one has sinned and is not ready to own up, what is likely to happen is that efforts to have the sin exposed will be fought back. The one in sin may attempt to prove his innocence and adamantly refuse to own up to the charge. If there is no evidence to prove the accused member guilty, as is usually the case, this deepens the mystery. It divides the congregation in to two groups. Some may believe that the accused did not do what he is alleged to have done while others are convinced that he must have done it. This brings a lot of confusion in the congregation. If the accused occupies an influential position or he is simply influential probably because he is financially well endowed, it goes without saying that there always will be those on his side ready to defend him at whatever cost while others will not, they feel that the charge may hold some water.

The two most common sins that the church members and even leader are accused of are adultery(or fornication) and financial fraud. It is usually difficult to prove that either of these did really happen. Kibe observes that in the case of adultery, for instance, it could be hard to establish the evidence. The one allegedly involve in adultery may deny it. To make the matters more complicated the spouse may put his

¹Ibid. ,29-30.

²Ibid. , 11.

or her weight behind the accused member for whatever reason. A wife may deny her husband's involvement in such a sin for several reasons including the fear that such revelations may destroy her home and traumatize her children. Kibe adds that, worse still, she may fear to take a stand lest she face a divorce too.

Kibe notes that in the case of financial fraud, the records may have been poorly kept. Or non-existent. In such a situation the accused may put a very strong "prove-it" defence. A severe conflict is obvious in this situation and deeply divides the congregation.

When Judas sins were exposed in John 13:21-29, there arose conflict in Judas against Jesus hence he went to befriend the ones who were at enmity with Jesus, the priests. Other scriptural cases of exposure of sin and wrong that led to conflict are: 1Sam 15:22 when Saul's sin was exposed and Gen 4:9- when Cain's sin was exposed.

The bottom line remains, however, that the particular church member or leader did sin or wrong and his exposure brought conflict and divided loyalty that has a potential of splitting the church. The accused may transfer from that church to another one elsewhere surrounded by his loyal band of supporters. Alternatively the other feuding group may leave the church.¹

The Conflict Prone Churches

Physicians know that certain patients are more prone to cancer or heart attack than others. Family histories or personality type indicates this. Similarly, some congregations are more prone to conflict than others. Although any congregation is

¹Kibe, 12.

capable of civil disruption, many go for years without any significant distress while others suffer one conflict after another.¹

Members of a conflict-torn congregation may develop a very poor image of their church or of ministry. While both the church members and the pastor can be heavy contributors to the congregational miseries, to place all the blame on persons is not entirely fair and is certainly not constructive. We must also consider the circumstances under which church members and their pastor relate to one another. Often the circumstances themselves contribute largely to conflict. Of course, people, and not circumstances, create animosity. Yet circumstances sometimes set up people for disagreement. To put it in another way, people may be conditioned to combat by the way they congregate. This in part explains why good people can get into trouble with one another.

It would simplify matters if we could identify all the factor that render a congregation conflict prone and then eliminate each one. Unfortunately some circumstances cannot be avoided. Furthermore, some circumstances contributing to conflict are nonetheless highly desirable. In fact pastors and lay leaders place major emphasis on producing several of the very potentially dangerous circumstances. Why? Because the church is strengthened by this circumstances and the Christian faith teaches the value behind them.²

Not all potentially dangerous circumstances, however, are desirable. Some are highly undesirable. What is more, most of them can be eliminated. We will have a difficult time eliminating a few because we have been taught that they are valuable.

¹Ibid., 37.

²Keith Huttenlocker, *Conflict and Caring* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1988), 37-38.

Some of the problem producing circumstances are sacred cows of the church and even of our culture. They are undergirded by theological tenets and social mores.

Churches in which one of the following circumstances exists should at least be aware that conflict is a strong possibility.

High Exchange. Congregations in which there is a great deal of interaction between members are conflict-prone. This is true regardless of the reasons for that high level of exchange. It is true even when the interaction has been very positive.¹ Willimon says conflict occur most often in congregations in which there is deep commitment to the church and adds that it is it's a sign of vitality.²

Sometimes high exchange is the result of physical circumstances. The congregation may be in a small town where the members see each other a great deal in many parts of their lives.³ They know each other's business and feel very neighbourly toward one another or the congregation itself may be very small. Consequently, the members see each other at every event of the church. Moreover, the members of a small church share much of the work. High exchange may also be the result of spiritual circumstances. The members are often together because they choose to be. Their common faith bonds them in a close-knit religious group, perhaps as a sect. More than likely they are urged to meet two, three, or four times a week for worship. Besides the main church worship gathering that comes once a week (Sabbath), are also other meeting such as women's, men's youths' meeting, choir rehearsals, evangelism efforts, committee and board meetings.

¹Ibid. , 38.

²Willimon, 19.

³McSwain, 35.

A high level of exchange is very desirable in the eyes of the institutional church. It promotes mutual support, which is essential to spiritual development. It enhances the church's witness in the community as an active thriving congregation. It provides personnel and facilitates giving, both which are necessary for the church to function well. Moreover, high exchange is just plainly enjoyable when everyone is amicable.

However, because of multiple contacts, there are also multiple opportunities for conflict. The more we meet together, the greater the likelihood that we will commit offences against one another. The adage "familiarity breeds contempt" plays a part here. We become so accustomed to one another so much so that we might grow careless about how we treat one another and what we say to each other. We may become less tactful and less solicitous. Visitors are treated better than members, haven't you noticed? We begin to note.

In his book, 'conflict and caring,' a book about preventing, managing and resolving conflict in the church, Huttenlocker tells a story about how a young associate pastor was deeply hurt for seemingly being lightly regarded by the congregation he served and which in his opinion he had served dedicatedly and was very friendly. The congregation refused to grant him a raise he requested. He couldn't understand. He was very capable and very popular. The church could have easily afforded it. He bemoaned, "The board members are my best friends. I play basketball with them. They are over at my house, or and I am at theirs." That explains it. He was just one of the guys. They could be stingy with him: after all he would understand. But he didn't. He left.

High exchange frequently contributes to conflict if, over the course of time and through many hours of mingling, people begin to harbour resentments. A series of

minor incidents can eventually add up to a serious dislike between persons. This may be true between members or a member and the pastor. One pastor said he estimates that every year a minister will offend two or three persons (members). Consequently, he reasoned, it was next to impossible to have a long-term pastorate. His conclusion may not be agreeable in all situations but the possibility, at least, is very real.¹

High Expectations. Conservative congregations are especially into expecting a lot from their members and pastors, observes Huttenlocker. There is apt to be a white and black mentality, that is, there is no much middle ground when it comes to life style and beliefs. There is great pressure to conform to that which is considered to be normative for church members of a particular communion. High expectation can be institutionally advantageous. The fastest growing congregations are frequently among the most dogmatic. There is a certain appeal to un-equivocation. It sounds authoritative. It spoon-feeds the young and they are to be un-inquisitive. It promises great reward to those who measure up. Those who comply have great certainty of being accepted. And praised. Moreover it is easy to feel superior to those who do not comply.

Of course, high expectations within the church is quite appropriate. The church should certainly call people to disciple. Our Lord invites us to take up the cross and daily follow him (Luke 9:23). The church that is like a city set on a hill (Matt. 5:14) is sure to have a high expectation of its members.

Yet with the high expectations come high risks. The more clearly lines are drawn, the more likely it is that someone will cross them and the more apparent it will be that they have been crossed. When members violate the congregation's written and

¹Huttenlocker, 40.

unwritten code, conflict is more likely to result. Some members will cause a stir if the transgressor are not corrected. Others will not like it if they are. The errant members themselves may become disruptive in their own defence.

In his book *Conflict and Caring*, Huttenlocker, tells a story how high expectations do cause conflict. He relates that, one church had held a united front against alcohol beverages. He continues that over several decades, however, the congregation attracted a new generation of members. Many of these were college educated and belonged to the upper socioeconomic brackets, in contrast with the earlier members. Most of these persons approved and practiced the social consumption of alcohol. The growing rift over the standards of the church was basically contained until the congregation called a new pastor who, like the older members steadfastly believed in and preached about total abstinence. This led to a confrontation and the eventual exodus of the people whose position was moderation. High expectations prevailed, but only at a heavy price. Huttenlocker concludes that, most people would say, the price had to be paid.

High Involvement. High involvement, like high expectations, is a characteristic of conservative churches. Such churches typically ask a lot of their members: time, abilities and money. A good church member is described as one who volunteers several hours to church work and give 10 percent and more of his or her income to the church. All this is expected as part of the believer's "responsible service." The church member is told that Christ requires it and that the salvation of others depends on it.¹

¹Ibid., 41.

High involvement, like high expectations is crucial to the institutional church. The local church could not survive without consecrated members. For many of us, there is no more meaningful or more important mission than fulfilling our responsibility to the church. We make no apology for and have no misgivings about our investment of time, energy and money in that mission.

However, with high investment usually comes a strong desire for output. McSwain puts it this way that, the more deeply ingrained is the sense of ownership about what is happening, the more possible is the conflict.¹ Because of what we give to the church, we feel-and rightly so-that our convictions and our concerns should be respected. If not we are likely to protest. Ownership in the life of the church is a very positive thing, if by that we mean participation in decision making and ministry. However there is a very thin line between participation and possessiveness. Sometimes highly involved persons will cross that line. When they do they generally want to dictate how the church should be run. They may then stifle the progress of the church or at least all other potential leadership. They are also likely to encounter conflict with other persons who, for whatever reasons, are equally determined to exercise control and enforce their will on the church, says Huttenlocker.

High involvement becomes acute dangerous when it is localized in an authority figure in the congregation. A strong layperson whose opinion amounts to the last word on every decision often becomes the antagonist to the pastor. He or she may serve a useful purpose by helping to maintain balance of power between the laity and the domineering pastor, or that person may serve no purpose except to disrupt and to impede.

¹McSwain, 36.

Huttenlocker tell a story of a semirural congregation which irrevocably splintered. He say after this one man assume inordinate control of the Congregation's affairs. Out of determination to avoid further calamity, he insisted on vetoing virtually everything each new pastor proposed. He has doubtlessly been a highly involved member for many years. Perhaps he has made great contributions to the church. Unfortunately it appear that high involvement has developed into ownership and has turned to possessiveness.¹

Low Trust. Despite the great amount of time some church members spend together and familiarity they have with one another, they will not necessarily develop relationship of trust. If they sense a failure to keep confidences or unwillingness to be understanding of faults they will lack authentic trust. This will become painfully obvious during stressful times.

Whenever there is an absence of trust there is also a reluctance to voice matters of contention until the irritation has reached a point of explosion. Furthermore, since no genuine relationship exist in such an atmosphere, there is little affection and commitment to bridge the conflict and soothe the feelings. Who cares about the survival of a casual acquaintance? Who needs someone who has not deemed dear to the heart?

High expectations and low trust often exist in corresponding proportion. When "appropriate" beliefs and behaviour are precisely defined and demanded, it is difficult to admit to nonconformity. One cannot trust in the presence of hash judgment.

However, concludes Huttenlocker that poor communication styles as well as high expectations are often the basis of low trust. Our choices of words and the tone

¹Huttenlocker, 42.

of voice, particularly when disagreement arise, will do much to determine whether or not we cultivate and sustain trusting relationship in church.

Low Understanding. Where people do not comprehend the consequences of their words and actions they will inevitably create conflict.

On the other hand, where idealism is so high that any conflict is viewed as the work of the devil, there will be little chance to work out differences in a forthright and constructive way. Churches that cling to an unrealistic goal of perfect tranquillity face the prospect of unexpected conflict when someone finds it impossible to continue the charade.

Where common courtesy is so lacking that people speak crudely to one another over slightest provocation, tension is certain to remain high in the congregation. There always seems to be at least one person in every group who is prone to blurt out critical thoughts to the detriment of another's feelings and well-being of the group. Some of this people may know better, doing so out of a bad habit or a bad attitude. However, most simply function in ignorance, like a man stumbling around in dark and braking expensive vases and lamps. The only world they know is one of axes, pitchforks, and sledgehammers. It is hard to disarm them.¹

Huttenlocker, shares a story about how a good pastor shared with him the pain he suffered as the result of these crude persons in the congregation he served. She had verbally abused him. Moreover she had assaulted members of the congregation, including some newcomers, resulting in several losses to the fellowship. This went on for many years. The pastor resolved to confront the woman, although he fully

¹Ibid., 44.

expected to be bludgeoned in the process. Low understanding is not a minor fault, because it causes major problems.¹

Low Respect. The conflict-prone church will place a high value on many things, but some things it may not value enough. One of these is likely to be leadership. It has been said that our age faces a crisis in leadership. In almost all institutions, including the church, we have tended to abandon respect for our leaders. This is, perhaps, related in part to our continuing emancipation as an enlightened and democratic society. Whatever the reason, it seems that we often place authorities in office in the same position as we do tin cans atop fence posts-objects of target practice.²

With low respect for the leadership in the church comes a whimsical tendency to confront the pastor, contrary to the days when the pastors was considered the Lord's anointed and therefore untouchable. Huttenlocker stresses that it seems we have gone from one extreme to the other. He further observes that the situation resembles ancient Israel before the days of Saul when "there was no king....; every man did what was right in his own eyes" (Judg.17:6). The result then was, as it is often today, chaos. No pastor should be a dictator, but conflict thrive on the rejection of biblically based authority.

Huttenlocker tells a story that, one day he was called upon to assist a splintered congregation in their search for a new pastor. He observes in the story that although there were many wonderful people in that church, who treated him very graciously, he detected a lack of respect for pastoral leadership that alarmed him. He

¹Ibid.

²Ibid., 45.

notes that although there was some justifications for that lack of respect, it nonetheless did not speak well for the future of that congregation. Like everyone else, pastors deserve to be considered innocent until found guilty.

Lack of respect for leadership may be accompanied by a lack of respect for organization. In such a case the congregation faces double jeopardy. Some congregation are too spiritual, they think that they can ignore the need for a good structure. This is dangerous. To presume that love will guarantee smooth-working relationships and that the Holy Spirit will inform all as to their tasks is to be negligent. God's work is done best, and all Christian graces flourish best, where things are done "decently and in order" (1 Cor.14:40).

Conclusively, when high exchange, high expectations, high involvement, low trust, low understanding, low respect exist, conflict should come as no surprise. The kindling has been stacked. Only a match is needed to strike the fire.¹

The Way those Caught in Wrong Doing or Sin are Handled

The way those found in wrong doing or in sin are handled in church and especially if the one charged with wrong is a leader, may lead to a serious conflict that has a potential to split the church. Whether or not the charged with sin actually sinned or not is usually not the issue here. The processes in Matthew 18:15-20 is very often ignored when it comes to solving such issues. While White offers that "a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump, and that it is necessary to purge it out, that you may be a

¹Ibid.

lump unleavened,"¹ yet the first initial steps recommended by our Lord need to be taken care of first and foremost.

The following four-points should be followed by a church leader when a member is found in sin.

- i. Approach the member alleged to have sinned alone and talk to him about his sin.
- ii. If the culprit above does not own up to his sin, involve one or two other members in the matter, and go back and talk to him about his sin.
- iii. Tell the church if he insists on denying the sin.
- iv. If in the presence of plain evidence the member refuses to own up, the church, then, has every reason to drop him from his or her membership.

Most of the time, however, this scriptural way is ignored and a great price is paid for it. In its place, two ways are usually followed: In the first place, a leader confronts a member alleged to have sinned, and secondly he stands up during one church service and takes everybody, including the culprit, by surprise thundering, “so and so has committed an unpardonable sin and therefore stands to be excommunicated.”

A different way is used when it is a top leader who is involved. Since the leader has advantage and control of the pulpit and cannot be reprimanded in public as would happen with a member, a rumour is spread amongst the congregation to the effect that he has committed a sin. This rumour, somehow, finds its way to the leader just as it was intended. He is usually shocked and dismayed as to how this came about. It is particularly more shocking to him if the news is true. He wonders how

¹Ellen G. White, *Acts of the Apostles* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1911), 314.

people came to know about it. If the news is false he is still shocked by how such a fabrication came about and even why it should be believed by anybody.

In both cases, a serious conflict and a boiling disunity comes up in such a church. The congregation, especially those who believe in the rumour treats him coldly and no longer obeys him outright. The gossip and rumour now turn on him and this greatly divides the members.¹

Variant Dynamics in Church Conflict

Again, although Conflict in a congregation may not people caused conflict it suffer temporarily or chronically from certain variant dynamics that threaten its unity and even its very existence. Four such dynamics that each alone is capable of precipitating crisis are:

Community Change. Community change will inevitably create problems for a congregation situated in an environment that in undergoing change.² Whether from commercial encroachment, ethnic shift or other factors, many congregations become largely isolated from residential neighbourhoods and geographically separated from constituents who once lived nearby. Eventually this affects attendance. Remaining members wishfully recall better days when the Sabbath school classrooms and the sanctuary were filled, rather than halve empty as apparent.

Seventh-day Adventist Church Dandora central Church is one such church that had been strategic to a close-knit neighbourhood. High percentage of its members lived within a walking distance to the church and their children attended the estate's primary school(s), and their church was a centre of worship, fellowship and service.

¹Kibe, 12, 13.

²Willimon, 19.

But gradually many of those families dispersed. They moved to new housing development at the edge of the city which meant they began to commuting to church. As a result some attended less frequently. Others went to their new neighbourhood churches. Other churches benefited from this dispersion but Dandora central Church suffered.

The Congregation situated in a changing neighbourhood is confronted with dubious alternatives. If it continues to operate as before, the church is not likely to reach the new people in the neighbourhood or the impersonalized crowds who eat or shop nearby or who pass by on the crowded thoroughfare. Consequently attendance, offerings and variety of programs stately will decline. This is likely to arouse concern. The Pastor or the church board (lay leaders) may be blamed for the church's disintegration. Opposing parties may develop with each pointing fingers at the other. Scapegoat may be sacrificed.

On the other hand, if the pastor and the lay leaders (church board) seize the initiative and propose some bold new course, conflict may likewise result. The highly involved-and-influential members especially those of long standing may not welcome the challenge of new ministries and the possibilities of welcoming new faces (often ethnically diverse).

Huttenlocker suggests that the third option is to relocate. This proposal may also be greeted with opposition. Those who sacrificed to build the existing facilities, whose children were married in them and whose parents were eulogised in them, have too many precious memories to abandon those hallowed halls. The history of congregations that moves show that they inevitably leave some members behind, either to worship with the body that occupies the facility or to join other churches in the vicinity.

The dumping of garbage next to SDA Dandora Central Church by Nairobi city council resulted in the church split over whether to exit or stay and fight the problem from right there. Eventually, the church shrunk as result of some members exiting the church because of the garbage's stench smell.

Financial Stress. Financial stress, as observes Huttenlocker, is a second dynamic that threatens the tranquillity of a local congregation.¹ When income lags behind expenses, responsible leaders of the congregation begin wondering what can be done to solve their financial woes. The pastor may find that all the eyes are on him or her. The congregation may begin to conceive thoughts like, could they get another pastor who would generate more income for the church. Others will defend the pastor. Even if the pastor is not held accountable for the church's financial problems, as a leader he is very likely to grow weary of the constant stress of trying to make ends meet. If the pastor or key people in the leadership of that church moved to other churches as a result. Congregational morale is almost certain to suffer. Dandora South is such a church that has experienced serious financial stress due to relocation of members to their own houses on the outskirts of the Nairobi city so much so that the church construction the church had begun stalled for three good year with no extra block added the building in construction partly because of the financial stress. Huttenlocker observes that, financial stress is as a result of community change as in the case of Dandora Central. Or it may be the result of relocation.

Sometimes financial stress results from growth goals². The pastor may envision building an extravagant church. Perhaps the pastor was successful in leading

¹Ibid.

²Huttenlocker, 77.

the congregation into ambitious programming that does not pay its own way (for example, bus ministry, radio or television broadcasts or weekday schools) or a building program based on assumption than reality. When financial crunch comes, the pastor amounts to another Moses leading God's disillusioned people into the wilderness.

Closed Power System. Closed power system may be less apparent to the casual observer than community change or financial stress, but it can be more diabolical than either.¹ A closed power system is characterized by a dominant handful (or fewer) of the persons who hold control of a church.² They may occupy formal positions in the organization, or they may rule from behind the scenes. George D Parsons and Speed B. Leas calls it (this power control system) over-control and chaos.³ It may consist of the pastor and puppet- like followers or of a church boss and henchmen. Whichever the case, this elite group is jealous of its control and refuses to share its power with others.

Closed power system controlled by laity are as quick to exclude the pastor as are other laypersons. Members of this power bloc have gained control through seniority, bullshness, financial support, demonstrated ability, years of service or simply the default of others. Understandably, pastors-at least the ambitious and strong-willed ones- find closed power system from which they are excluded very offensive. If they choose to challenge the power brokers, they usually find it very difficult to survive.

¹Ibid.

²Willimon, 19.

³Lott, 65.

A closed power system dominated by the pastor is equally very offensive to concerned and strong-willed laypersons who find themselves excluded. This accounts for major conflict that develop not just once. Soon or later the outsiders push to become insiders, precipitating a power struggle.

Pastors who feel victimized by a closed power system may challenge it out of naivety or anger. With either they are likely to act without forethought of the consequences or calculated strategy for the contest. The pastor may challenge the system because their integrity requires it or because it seems necessary for the survival of the church. Whatever prompts the pastor's initiative, the conflict is apt to be severe unless caring accompanies confrontation.

Whether they are dominated by pastor or laypersons, some closed power systems are so formidable that they withstand all attacks. Whereas community change and financial stress represent a clear threat to the church as an institution, closed power system represent a concealed threat. Eventually closed power system will be betrayed by declining attendance and offering.

Closed power system invariably lead to conflict surrounding the pastor, either as a result of the pastor's attempt to penetrate the system or as a result of determined laypersons contesting the pastor's control.

Laypersons who have a strong compulsion to be in control of a local congregation may have it for various reasons. They are often authoritarian persons who also insist on dominating other scenes in the landscape of their lives. Sometimes they are perfectionists who must dictated how everything has to be done since no one is presumed wise enough or capable enough to function without their direction. Sometime this people have formed such a poor image of the ministry that they luck

trust, an essential element to shared control.¹Closed power system seem to have been the case in 3Joh 1. 9, 10.

Prescriptive Expectation. Prescriptive expectations pose a threat not only to the congregational unity, but also to the pastor's personal integrity and identity. A pastor can't be expected to fill a grocery list of prescriptive expectations. This dictates too narrowly what the pastor can be and do. It is appropriate to have expectation of a pastor. It is inappropriate for those expectations to be prescriptive, that is imposed on the pastor by a select committee (usually of influential) members of the congregation. Prescriptive expectations amount to arbitrary demands, which can target one's performance, value, or style.²

Performance. Is required of every pastor, so what is an acceptable level of performance? What question is always not answered to mutual satisfaction of both the pastor and the people? Some pastors view their performance as acceptable while some lay persons disagree. This is a matter of interpretation or more likely, of expectation. The dilemma could be caused by a poor performance or by unreasonable demands. Both options need to be explored. Examples of complains raised up by laypeople are that the pastor's sermons are poor. This is an unmet qualitative expectation. Others complain that their pastor does not visit members enough. Others demand that the sermons must produce alter responses. Other still demand that the budgets must be met annually. This is rather extreme example of a performance rated prescriptive expectations. Such expectations are unrealistic and deadly.

¹Huttenlocker, 79.

²Ibid. , 79.

Values. Endanger congregational accord when those of the pastor are at variance with those of vocal laypersons. Many laypersons feel strongly about how members of the church should live and what the mission of the church should be. It is well that they should. Yet, when this are too narrowly prescribed, the pastor is denied input on either subject. Who is to be the final judge on matters of conscience? Is there room for more than one interpretation of the scripture? Who is to voice God's call for the present age? Do the times require a new approach to mission, or even a new direction in ministry? This are value-laden questions and should be the subject of continuous scrutiny not uncritical defence.¹

Style. Style is something hardly heard about in church. But the pastor's style can strongly influence a congregation. Here we refer in the very broadest sense to the pastor's demeanour. This can include the way pastor relates to others, where and how and with whom he spends time and how he spends money. It can entail his degree of demonstrativeness, his presence or carriage, his leadership technique and of course the way he dresses. In other words, we are talking about all the behaviours which, taken together contribute to the pastors uniqueness as a human being.²

Style is the projection of ourselves – who we are and what we value. The pastor's style dramatically influences the membership to a great degree of acceptance, because style addresses two subjects of vital concern to them: image and identification. Church members want their pastor to generally personify their image of a model pastor. They also want their pastor to be one with whom they can identify, that is, one of their own kind. Therefore as a professional and as an individual, the

¹Ibid., 80.

²Ibid.

pastor may be squeezed into playing a role just to meet those prescriptive expectations. Pastors found in this bind will resent the pressure, voicing a need to be themselves. When this happens conflict can develop.

This kind of conflict happens in the following two circumstances. When a pastor follows another who has served in that place for a long time, and when the pastor crosses sectional, cultural, or socioeconomic boundaries.¹ After ten years of ministering with a certain pastor, a congregation often become so comfortable with a pastor that virtually any new comer will be rejected. The new pastor's style will obviously not be the same as his predecessor's, and people may resent this and consider the new pastor's style inappropriate. At the very least they may have difficulty adjusting to him. One congregation was quit troubled after accepting as a pastor a young man half the age of his predecessor. The latter had served the congregation admirably for more than twenty five years. Many of the older members of the congregation could not forgive the young pastor for being so very different from the one whom they had grown to love and respect.

Style can also be a major problem for pastors who move to locations where customs radically differ from their own and for pastors whose educational level is significantly different from the congregation's.²

Huttenlocker concludes on variant dynamics in church conflict that community change and financial stress are crisis related. Closed power systems and prescriptive expectations are constituent related. The former are temporary, whether fatal or not. The latter tends to be chronic. The latter are also less excusable and more

¹Ibid. , 81.

²Ibid. , 82.

subtle. They are more painful to deal with. For pastors who feel victimized by either, they must contend with the enemy within the ranks. Both closed power system and prescriptive expectations represent congregational neuroses that will attack a pastor's ministry and personhood. Some talented pastors, feeling deceived by those whom they have been called to serve, in pain do say they won't pastor. God be praised, they later change their mind.

Variation dynamics, insists Huttenlocker, are factors with which every pastor must reckon. They exist in one form or another in virtually every congregation. How the pastor responds to them will determine not only the tenure, but also the effectiveness of the ministry.¹

Selfish or Egocentric Leaders

The book of James contains an explanation of how selfishness and or egocentric leadership causes conflicts:

What causes wars and fighting among you? Come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members? Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not. Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts.” (James 4:1-3).

James says that focusing exclusively on what you want and then do what you must to get it is most elementary, basic, rudimentary way to split the church. Moeller observes on this that when we insist on our desire ruling the day, we can end up tearing up the local church. He adds that while this does not mean surrendering all convictions and preferences to live a passive and apathetic lives, but if we should insist that our viewpoint is the only one permissible when it comes to small matters

¹Ibid.

and not on matters biblical Absolute (Clear, unmistakable fundamental truth of the Scripture then we will surely spit the church.¹

The following are some of the characteristics of a selfish leader who, because of their selfishness, they end up steering conflict and then divisions.

i. Feed themselves.

The book of Ezek 34 documents some type of shepherds or leaders who looked after their own interests alone. They do things that only favour them regardless of the state of the flock. Such leaders, feed themselves and not the flock. They eat the fat and clothe themselves with the wool.

They take advantage of the flock to enrich themselves. They impose on the congregation selfish projects that only benefit them. Their preaching is on the extremes of prosperity, but is only them who benefit.

ii. Kill the sheep

A leader's duty is to develop leadership gifts and talents in the church. He is to equip others to occupy positions of leadership. Selfish leadership, however, kills initiative. This can be in the form of frustrating the use of talents and gifts in the church by members as well as stifling any leadership potential in others. This is done so that none will come near such a leader, none will rival him and thus none will question him. This is stunting the growth of the flock so that only the leader reigns.

When the leader's killing of the sheep is obvious, a conflict is obvious as well. No matter how good or bad a leader is, he will always have a following. That is why

¹Robert Moeller, *Healing Conflict in Your Church: Love in Action* (Sisters, OR.: Multnomah Books, 1994), 85.

when some take a stand against him; others will automatically take an equally firm stand for him. The two groups become rivals, conflicts and the result is division.¹

iii. Does not feed the flock.

A good church spiritual leader is one who feeds the flock. He takes the form of Bible studies, fellowship and discipleship classes as well as regular quality seminars. He exposes the flock to growth and maturity. However a selfish leader deliberately fails to feed his flock to keep them ignorant and thus dependant fully on him. He will only be found where he can make selfish gain, or where his ego can be flattered. Within a short time the congregation becomes increasingly dissatisfied. As already mentioned before, whatever a leader may be, good or bad, he will always have supporter. In this case therefore there will rise up a conflict between those dissatisfied with the leader's lack of feeding the flock and those who see no big issue in this situation.²

iv. Does not strengthen the weak

Kibe adds that a selfish leader has no time for the weak in his congregation. He visits only those who can meet his selfish ambitions and has nothing to do with the "weak" among his flock. Such a leader *sets a social class*. Only those who belong to such a class are honoured and valued. The rest are left to fend for themselves.

v. Doesn't heal that which is sick.

On this one, Kibe says:

It is a pity that proponents of prosperity gospel have declared that, it is a curse for one to be weak and poor. The weak and poor in the congregation, must have sinned before God and pronounced unclean like the lepers in the Bible days. This is distorted gospel indeed, for God knew there would be the weak, the poor, the widows and all sort of disadvantaged people among us, and we

¹Kibe, 14.

²Ibid.

are to take care of them. A leader is expected to bring emotional, spiritual and even promote physical healing to the flock. However a leader who has given in to selfishness cannot do so. His heart is not in the people but what he can gain out of leadership. The leader cannot hide forever in the cloak of pretence, and his real self eventually comes out. When it does, it causes major conflict and division later.

vi. Neither brings that which is driven out or those that are lost

The bible says of a shepherd,

Be diligent to know the state of your flocks, and look well to your herds (Prov. 27:23). This is contrary to what we see in a selfish leader. It is not his concern to look out for the harassed flock. He is not concerned with who or what drives them away. In fact he does not even notice their absence. He does not look for those driven away or those that are lost. It does not bother him that someone backslide and is in need of restoration. His main preoccupation is “what do I gain from that?”

vii. Lording over them.

Peter wrote to fellow church elders that.

The elders who are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for dishonest gain, but of a ready mind; Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being examples to the flock (1 Peter 5:1-3). Peter had foreseen dictatorial tendencies in the churches where leaders would rise to oppress the flock. When the flock is oppressed this way, there is dissatisfaction. This soon spreads among the congregation and gnaws itself into divisions. Kibe adds here that a conflicts and hence a division in churches come from an attempt by the congregation to free itself from selfish and dictatorial leaders.

Poor Communication

Wherever conflict exists no matter what cause or kind, communication has played a key role. More specifically, bad communication has either sparked the conflict or fuelled the fire. The wise man say in Prov. 15:1

A soft answer turns away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger.

And Prov. 18:21 says

Death and life are in the power of the tongue: and they that love it shall eat the fruit thereof.

It follows that what we say and how we say it determine how others respond to it.

Persons who use grievous words are apt to stir up anger and conflict. There is virtually never a silent war. The emotions of conflict find voice. The Survival Response in conflict relies on voice to accomplish its ends. Without communication it would be difficult to have conflict. Communication tends to get progressively worse- that is, more heated and vindictive- as the conflict intensifies. Communication server conflict while at the same time conflict corrupts communication.

Doctrinal Reasons

Churches also experience conflicts and even eventually serious divisions over doctrinal differences. These include and is not limited to:

- i. The doctrine of the Holy Spirit.

In some churches (the west particularly) the conflicts and division is over whether the Holy Spirit is a person, wind or an influence.

In most Pentecostal and charismatic churches(especially in Africa), if the Holy Spirit is not “*giving prophecies*” or not doing something supernatural, some members may quit such a church to start one that has manifestation of the Holy Spirit regardless of whoever the Holy Spirit may be. To such, the Holy Spirit is the Holy Spirit only if there are manifestations. While the west can endlessly debate whether the Holy Spirit

is a person or a force, most African Churches debate whether the "Holy Spirit" exists in a specific church or not.¹

The Devil

When sin was conceived in the heart of Lucifer, Isaiah says:

How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations! For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High. Yet thou shalt be brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit. (Isaiah 14:12-15)

He caused conflict in heaven and resultant to that he was cast out, Says Ezekiel:

Son of man, take up a lamentation upon the king of Tyre, and say unto him, thus says the Lord GOD; you were the seal of perfection, full of wisdom, and perfect in beauty. You have been in Eden the garden of God; every precious stone was your covering, the sardius, topaz, and the diamond, the beryl, the onyx, and the jasper, the sapphire, the emerald, and the carbuncle, and gold: the workmanship of your timbrels and of your pipes was prepared in you in the day that you were created. You are the anointed cherub that covers; and I have set you so: you were upon the holy mountain of God; you have walked up and down in the midst of the stones of fire. You were perfect in your ways from the day that you were created, till iniquity was found in you. By the multitude of your trade they have filled the midst of you with violence, and you have sinned: therefore I will cast you as profane out of the mountain of God: and I will destroy you, O covering cherub, from the midst of the stones of fire. Your heart was lifted up because of your beauty, you have corrupted your wisdom because of your splendor: I will cast you to the ground, I will lay you before kings, that they may behold you (Ezekiel 28:12-17).

Ephesians 6:12 says:

For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in heavenly places.

Behind all divisions, strife's and conflicts in church is the devil and his demons out to discredit the work of the Lord. There may be no church misunderstanding, conflict, division or split that does not come from him. He opposes

¹Ibid.

the kingdom of Christ and hates where the name of the lord is mentioned. His main task is to fight the Lord Jesus Christ and all who represent Him. The devil can use anything and anybody to cause conflicts, divisions and split.

Varieties of Conflict

Mystery is present in every church conflict.¹ We know that particular events have triggered the hostilities, but we may not fully understand the significance of what happened. We know that certain persons are angry with us and that we are likewise angry with them, but we may not fully understand why. We hear heated words—the charges and the counter charges are so freely hurled about—but we may not understand with certainty what they mean. We think about the situation constantly, yet we are baffled about many things, including what to do about the whole sorry mess.

Much of the mystery surrounding church conflict will be removed when we see that all conflict is either personality centred or principle centred. The crucial distinction influences all attempts at solutions. Prescriptive expectations and closed power system can precipitate either type of conflict. Community change and financial stress generate only the principle-centred conflict, though personality conflict frequently develop as a consequence of the initial conflict.²

Personality-Centred Conflict

¹Huttenlocker, 83.

²Ibid.

Personality-centred conflict results from compulsion to blame the personality in the conflict instead of the problem itself.¹ It is also a basic dislike of one person for another. The feeling is often mutual – eventually if not initially. For a variety of reasons, most of us have a fairly strong opinion about how persons should speak and generally conduct themselves. We accept those who meet those expectations and are inclined to reject those who do not. We find ourselves compatible with the former and incompatible with the latter.

Often there is a significant dissimilarity between us and those we dislike. We find their dissimilarity distasteful, inappropriate or threatening. Since we consider our view of how people should speak and behave normative, those who speak and act otherwise will be considered unconventional and even abnormal. Young people describe those who are different from themselves as “weird.” That is how we may feel too, even though it is not verbalized.

On the other hand, we may dislike people who are like very similar to us. This is because we see mirrored in them characteristics we do not like in ourselves. For example, if we see ourselves as indulgent, stubborn, jealous, selfish or overbearing. We may recoil from those who seem to have these traits. There are ample opportunities for personality-centred conflict within the church. Such conflicts might break out between members of the same congregation or between members and the pastor. The higher the degree of exchange the greater the possibility of conflict.

It should be understood that when member's expectations for the pastor relate strictly to the *personal style*, any conflict that results from a failure to meet those expectations will be personality-centred conflict because the conflict is based on

¹Derick Tibbits with Steve Halliday, *Forgive to Live: How Forgiveness Can Save Your Life* (Nashville, TN: Integrity Publishers, 2006), 30.

dislike of the minister as a person, not on any position of the pastor. Likewise when members of the congregation engage related to their respective style rather than to their positions, that conflict is personality-centred.¹

Whether it is between the church members or between the pastor and church members, personality-centred conflict has its basis in prescriptive expectations. Someone is unwilling to allow another to be different. Pastors are as capable of imposing prescriptive expectations to laypeople and vice versa. To the extent that any of us has developed style expectations of other and to the degree that we refuse to accept those whose style is otherwise, it must be said that our expectations are prescriptive.

Principle–Centred Conflict

Principle–centred conflict is quite different from personality centred conflict. It results from sharp differences of opinion over matters of significant importance to the opposing parties. Two people might have thoroughly enjoyed each other's company many times (as on fishing expeditions or shopping spree) and yet become terribly divided over a principle or issue. Their dislike is not for each other's style, but for each other's *position*. This kind of conflict results when there is a disagreement over ideology, theology, philosophy or methodology. At stake are foundational values or crucial objectives. Principle-centred conflict, it should be noted, often revolves around standards beliefs, or mission tasks of the church. It may also centre on how the church is to be run, by whom and how well. When the question is how well, the issue is performance, usually the pastor's. When the question is how or by whom, the issue always relates to control, a closed power system may be at risk and consequently

¹Huttenlocker, 84.

responsible for the conflict. Even when not at risk, closed power system usually dictates what the standards, beliefs and the mission of the church are as well as how the church is to be run, by whom and how well.

As we have already noted, most church members, at least of conservative churches, have high expectations of one another. Failure to meet those expectations may generate principle-centred conflict, – namely the standards of the church – is at risk. Layperson's expectations for their pastor may focus not just on the morality, but also his performance or his support for crucial congregational values. Again, any conflict developing from the pastor's failure to fulfil these expectations will be a principle-centred conflict.

Principle-centred conflict often occurs when someone feels compelled to promote something, rectify something or preserve something. When the conflict becomes fully-blown, there is a lot of blaming, judging and labelling. Combatants may be especially ruthless with one another because of the presumed righteousness of the cause. The higher the involvement of the persons, the greater the likelihood of entering in to principle-centred conflict. Since they will have substantial interests to protect. The more domineering a closed power system, the more likely the chances of a principle-centred conflict.

Conflict centred on principle is rational in that it has a cognitive foundation, even though participants may not always think, speak, or act rationally. Begun in reason, even principle-centred conflict evokes considerable feeling. Initially there is not usually dislike for the other person, but it frequently develops. The conflict then takes on the appearance of being personality-centred. That time, resolution becomes complicated, because the feelings must be handled along with the original issues involved. It is usually more effective to begin with feelings and work backwards

toward the issues, since issues cannot be resolved until feelings are managed, emphatically.¹

Pastors are as prone to principle-centred conflict as to those that are personality-centred. Because they are the chief spokespersons for the church, the chief programmers and the chief administrators, they are constantly dealing with principles and issues. At any time a laypersons may take exception to what the pastor is saying or doing. Most major church conflicts are principle-centred, and in a majority of cases the pastor's position on a matter or another place him or her squarely at the heart of the conflict.

To persons of strong conviction, principle-centred conflict is as irresistible as it is distasteful. This is true whether we are talking about a layperson who has sharp differences of opinion with the pastor, or the pastor who is disturbed with the state of the church. In each case, each will see themselves as "defenders of the faith" and that is a position no idealist no zealot will avoid.

The Principle-centred conflict is more apt to be fatal to the pastor than the personality centred dispute. Unless their personality dislike for the pastor becomes acute, most lay persons will forbear the minister. That is not so when the pastor is shaping or attempting to shape the church in a way that is not pleasing to them. In other words, they may tolerate a pastor who is a nuisance to them personally, but not one whom they perceive as a menace to the church. If necessary, they will suffer inconvenience over the pastor, but they will not permit "God" to suffer so. People who have personality-centred conflict may solve the problem by avoiding one another

¹Ibid., 88.

as much as possible, but people of conviction find it difficult to avoid a conflict over principle.

Example is given of certain young pastor who received a call to a church that was in a growth spiral. He seemed quite unsuited for that church. He was a country boy; his predecessor had been almost Hollywood type of person. He was somehow dogmatic; his predecessor had been an ecumenical. As anyone would imagine, in less than one year the congregation called for that young man's resignation. "Where is it I went wrong, he asked?" he asked bemused. What was obvious is that he and the congregation were a mismatch from the beginning. Because his style was deferent from his predecessor's, he was quickly immersed in personality-centred conflict. Because of his inflexible doctrinal position, he was trapped in a principle-centred conflict. Most of people can hardly survive one conflict let alone two.

Although potentially any pastor can become involved in conflict of either kind, most pastors are more vulnerable to one than the other observes Huttenlocker. For example pastors who are warm-hearted and are liked by all may not be much disciplined and may then fail to meet performance-related prescriptive expectations. Their problem is likely to be principle-centred conflict. Then again, pastors who work hard at the task and who have well-honoured ministerial skills but lack interpersonal skills will be vulnerable to personality-centred conflict, since they are not likely to meet style-related prescriptive expectations.

There is explanation behind every conflict, although it may not be readily apparent. The explanation may not be communicated, or a false explanation may be given. Some explanations are so vague that they amount to no explanation at all. Hence the mystery. When lay persons press for a pastor's transfer/resignation, they sometimes make statements such as "His sermons do not feed me" or he has been

here long enough”. What chance does the pastor have of overcoming these objections? They may be deceitful attempts to undermine the pastor’s standing with the church. This then make his dismissal easier. Layperson may also seek the pastor’s transfer/resignation with such comments as “The church is going down under his leadership” or “the people do not like her.” Such messages may be correct or may be false propaganda. If their truth can be substantiated they must stand as valid causes for concern. If however, they are not correct assessments, the pastor must look deeper for the cause of the discontentment.¹

Pastors likewise may misrepresent the conflicts in which they are involved, resorting to remarks such us “Most of those who are against me aren’t even Christians” or “They have given all their previous pastors’ hard times.” Even if true, neither of these defences is valid if the pastor is honestly at fault in one way or another. They are merely attempts to evade complicity and will be counterproductive to any attempts at conflict resolution. They only manifest the pastor’s drive to survive.

We would profit by looking beyond these unfair explanations to discover why we feel the need to resort to their use. Perhaps it is because we lack the courage to confront others with the actual offense or we are afraid of hurting their feelings if we tell them the truth. It could be that we are ashamed of our real complaint or we realize that it will not win much support if it were voiced. It is also possible that we know that our real complaint will indict us, as well as our offenders. We need to be honest with ourselves and others.

None of these reasons justifies giving others a dishonest answer for our controversy with them. We owe every one the truth. Game playing serves no useful

¹Ibid., 90.

purpose. It only confuses persons of honest intent and complicates conflict resolution. Frustration and futility results when the cause of conflict is misdiagnosed. We cannot resolve personality-centred conflict by working on principle-centred concerns. Nor can we successfully resolve principle-centred conflict by working on personality-centred concerns. Still more precise information is needed.

Suppose a pastor has critics who allege that his or her sermons are “not spiritual enough.” Although this is the voiced concern the real complaint is that the pastor has been too active in attempts by the local ministerial to promote equal housing opportunities. Even if the pastor changed the sermons drastically to provide deeper spiritual insight, the critics will not be placated. Why? Because the real source of the problem has not been addressed.

Likewise, pastors who are secretly opposed for their liberal theological leanings will not accomplish much by striving especially hard to be friendly. Nor will the pastor who is perceived to lack social grace increase in esteem by personally painting all the church’s children classrooms. In every case of church conflict there must be a clear determination of its root cause before progress can be made toward resolution. All mystery must be removed.¹

People involved in personality-centred conflict can learn to coexist. Even though they may never develop strong, positive relationships, they can admit their problem with one another and work toward mutual respect.² As Christians are obligated to correct or to restrain habits or practices that are offensive to one another. Yet basic personalities will remain essentially the same. Hence, in as far as their

¹Ibid., 91.

²Ibid.

shared life in the church is concerned, they will likely have to practice conflict management, since conflict resolution may be beyond them.¹ Under those conditions this is an adequate expression of *caring*.

It will be imperative for people involved in principle-centred conflict them to set the disturbing principle or issue in context. Whatever divides them usually needs not become larger than what unites them. They must value the unity of the congregation more than their personal points of view, and they must value their relationship more than their vain pride. The likelihood of an acceptable resolution of the conflict will depend on everyone's willingness to work toward some mutual acceptable middle ground. This too is caring.

The Survival Response in Conflict

Someone has wisely observed to feel normal under abnormal circumstances is abnormal. God has so constituted humankind that emotional, mental and physical changes occur within us in response to crisis. This is part of our survival system.

Conflict is a crisis, it is like war. Once it breaks out, wherever, including in church, the opposing parties will respond to the conflict emotionally and mentally and will employ various fighting strategies to make sure that their side wins². This response; emotionally, mentally and the strategizing for a win, is what some conflict scholars call system of conflict. It is the Survival Response in conflict, it is a normal and natural response as people attempt to resolve differences among them.³

¹Ibid.

²Kale, 87.

³Ibid.

While appreciating that the response to fight is normal, natural and healthy, the tactics to fight can be either ethical, which Kale calls fair fighting or unethical, which he calls dirty fighting. Naturally, the fighting strategy is the dirty fight. The secret of resolving a conflict is in overcoming the dirty fight and express the fair fight. Fairness ensures the interest of the opposing side are represented in reaching final resolution. The dirty fight, Huttenlocker call's mentality of conflict

The Mentality of Conflict

Because church conflict amounts to an emergency situation, emotions arise to meet the crisis. Emotion notwithstanding, when resolving a conflict we need to uphold morals. Mentality of conflict is about the value of upholding the principle and ethics in pursuit of conflict resolution.¹ To begin with, just as the nervous system is put on the alert during conflict so is the mental faculties. Our minds work typically overtime trying to concoct schemes to defeat our opponents. We may reach a new high in generating new ideas. We may also reach a new low in the measure we are willing to take. During conflict, our thought processes can take us in some devious directions as we make concessions to expediency that is far from becoming God's people. The truth is that church conflict poses a severe threat to the moral and ethical values that most Christians normally affirm. We may be tempted to violet principles that are ordinarily held sacred. This uncharacteristic willingness to override conscience can be termed the mentality of conflict. The mentality of conflict is fostered by two weighty consideration.

1. The righteousness of the cause
2. The drive to survive

¹Huttenlocker, 24.

Righteousness of the Cause. The first of this two is righteousness of the cause. As committed Christians who love the church and who have invested a great deal in it, we are understandably jealous of its well-being. We will not sit idly by and see it damaged or its affairs poorly managed. Were it otherwise we would bow out of the conflict or never have entered it at all. Finding ourselves in the midst of a tenacious struggle and feeling very strongly about the outcome, we can rather easily justify our own misconduct.

At first we may resist questionable strategies. But if all conventional means of prevailing over our opponents have failed? What if fighting fairly isn't adequately protecting the Lord's interests-or ours. Isn't it acceptable or even appropriate, under the circumstances, to employ whatever tactic necessary to save the church? This repressive tactics may have the appearance of legitimacy when carried out through manoeuvres in parliamentary procedure that keep those keep those representing opposing position from participating in the discussions. This include veiled threats: loss of leadership, and actual punishment of those having opposing positions.¹

The Mentality of conflict reasons, "Normally I wouldn't do this (for example, politics², dispensing with the church's bylaws, abusing verbally, or spreading derogatory information), but in this case it is necessary." In other words, the end justifies the means. Ironically, some who decry situational ethics as an ideology of the devil may actually subscribe to it in the name of righteousness.

The fallacy of mentality of conflict is the conviction that the end justifies the means. This believe is never true; it is anti-ethical to the tenor of the Bible.

¹Kale, 91.

²Charles H Cosgrove & Dennis D. Hatfield, *Church Conflict: The Hidden Systems Behind the Fights* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1994), 129.

Expediency must never replace the principle as our operating guide. What is called immoral and unethical does not become moral and ethical when it is performed for a so called or actually a righteous cause.¹ Jesus would not turn stones into bread, because in that situation hunger was not the ultimate value to be served. It was more crucial to resist the devil than to fill his stomach.

Huttenlocker concludes that conflict is without exception served by truth and honesty. Integrity must be maintained because it is essential to trust and unity can only be built through trust and mutual respect.

Drive to Survive. Conflict is a type of war. The objective is to overcome the opponents. Of course their aim is to overcome us. Hence each side is attempting to survive at the expense of the other. Thus the drive to survive disposes us to the same rationalization as the presumed righteousness of the cause, that is, the end justifies the means.

Pastors who feel they must survive professionally will be strongly tempted to unethical tactics whenever opposition seeks their dismissal. When not only their careers are at stake but also their financial solvency, the pressure is intense to violate principle and conscience.

Lay person who perhaps have been lifelong members of a congregation may similarly be tempted to act unethically rather than be pushed out by a new pastor. Mix in personal pride and drive to survive have a mounding temptation. A friend who had been raised-up in a certain church recalls a conflict that arose in church when he was a teenager. His pastor had said to prominent layperson, “There isn’t room in this church

¹Huttenlocker, 25.

for both of us.” Her reply was, ” I was here long before you arrived, and I will be here long after you are gone.”¹

The problem with allowing the drive to survive to dictate our behaviour is that, according to the example set by our master, survival is not the ultimate consideration—Redemption is. The cross serves as an eternal reminder that Christians do not subscribe to worldly idea of always looking out for yourself.

To illustrate this point Huttenlocker tell a story of mediation he was involved in of a dispute between some local members of a congregation and their elderly pastor:

We sat late into the night listening to charges against the Pastor, most of them insignificant. On, on, on his critics went, pressing their case as if the world depended on their winning it. Finally it came the pastor’s chance to defend himself. He had had several successful pastorate elsewhere and was a beloved Christian brother. His replay stunned both the critics and us. He said simply, “Well I have nothing to say. If they are not happy with me I will step aside.” And he did, apparently putting the episode behind him without bitterness.²

The price of conflict resolution is, among other things, sacrifice, and observes, Huttenlocker. Those on both sides must relinquish pride, the claims of omniscience, some personal rights, the mask of self-righteousness and the compulsion to serve Christ Church by our own efforts. That is a lot to give up, but no more than is necessary to redeem one’s opponents, him/herself and the local congregation. Viewed that way, it is a small price to pay. In short the mentality of conflict must give way to caring.³

¹Ibid. , 26.

²Ibid. , 27.

³Ibid.

The Emotion of Conflict

Conflict in church is not time of normalcy, so it is expected that we will not feel normal at such times. Emotions, whether positive or negative, are real.

This emotions make reconciliation either possible or not. It is therefore important to understand the emotion of conflict so that we can know when we can initiate resolution or whether we should wait a bit or whether it is beyond reconciliation.

Huttenlocker notes that there are four negative emotions commonly that afflict those caught up in conflict, and this are Anger, guilt, anxiety and frustration.¹

Anger. Huttenlocker explains that anger strikes early in the conflict. It is very likely the first unwelcome visitor: we are instinctively angry toward our offenders. Their objectionable action or reaction fresh in our minds. We mentally replay over and over their irritating words or the inflammatory scene. And every time we reflect on the events, our anger flares again. How could they? We ask indignantly.

When involved in conflict many of us find that we are angry with ourselves as well as with others. We may be annoyed because we have allowed the situation to bother us. We may be disgusted with ourselves for having been caught up in a conflict, wishing either that we had stayed out of it or that we had handled it better from the beginning.

Eventually we may become agree with God although this is difficult to admit. Conflict raises some pointed questions about God's participation (or lack of it) in human dilemmas. We may find ourselves asking such questions as "Why doesn't God do something about this people who are wreaking havoc in his church?" The

¹Ibid. , 18.

implication is that God is not being responsible, and that infuriates us especially since we are trying so hard to be responsible.

If there are other whom we expect to assist in the resolution we may soon be angry with them “Why can’t they do more?” we may ask. Or we may exclaim, “Why can’t they see how wrong those people are?” or “Why are they handling things the way they are?”¹

Anger is a legitimate feeling. God himself gave it to us just as He gave us all other emotions. God Himself knows anger. When wrong has been done, even the righteous may be angry and probably should be. Yet we should be aware that anger is an emotion, and as such, it is not always very objective. Objectivity is not its function. It emanates from the heart, not from the intellect; it is real but not necessarily logical. Huttenlocker say, this means that we must recognize it but we should not put a lot of confidence in its perspective. We need to interrogate anger to see if it is telling us the truth about our opponents and if it is accurately interpreting event to us.²

“We need to remember that there is such a thing as defence mechanism, adds Huttenlocker. It is neutral. We must always balance the reporting of anger with unbiased investigation of the facts. Are our opponents totally at fault for all that has happened? Were all their motives entirely bad? Have they done everything we allege that they have done? It is never good to let anger to have the last word on one’s opponent.³

¹Ibid. , 19-20.

²Ibid. , 20.

³Ibid. ,27.

Guilt. Guilt usually follows closely behind anger in conflict situations. Most of us have been taught that Christian should not become angry. Even if we convince ourselves rationally that we are justified in being angry, we may still feel guilty because our subconscious mind will condemn us on behalf of those who told us in childhood that we must not show anger. Here we are supposed to love our enemies and now we can hardly tolerate them.

Specifically, we may feel guilty about the resentment we hold toward our opponents. We have not been able to dismiss our anger. We find ourselves brooding over what they said or did when we would much prefer being able to forget the whole thing and continue as before. Perhaps we feel guilty about what we have said out to our opponents, words spat out in a burst of temper that now we wish might be recalled as General Motors recalls defective automobile. Or we may feel guilty over gossiping about our opponents. Again we may feel guilty because of the tactics that we have used in our battle that are contrary to our conscience.

Anxiety. Anxiety eventually accompanies conflict. We are likely to be anxious about our future with the congregation. Given the hard feelings that have developed, we begin to wonder whether it will be possible to remain part of the congregation.

If we are supportive of the pastor, the anxiety is on his or her behalf. How is the pastor able to continue under such mistreatment? What is to become of his ministry? Of course there is the corresponding anxiety regarding the spiritual and emotional well-being of friends. Perhaps the greatest anxiety of all has to do with the future of the congregation itself. Can it survive the conflict?¹

¹Ibid. , 21-22.

All threats raised by church conflict can be realized. Friendship can be permanently broken, pastor's ministry can be severely damaged, church members can become casualties, and the congregation can suffer irreparable loss. We do not have the luxury of thinking, "it will all work out." That is precisely why a peaceful solution to church conflict is imperative. Yet the anxieties we feel in church conflict are like all other anxieties: They are better left at Jesus' feet. We need not carry burdens as heavy as these. The church is His and we are His. We must relinquish all to his care.

Frustration. Frustrations eventually afflict those who are party to conflict unless solution comes within reasonable time. Conflict bring tension, and most of us are simply not constituted to deal with tension for a long period of time. Our tolerance of for discomfort wears out. Short of leaving the church, our only hope is submitting the entire situation and the parties involved (including ourselves) to God.

Because frustration is a temporary state, one of two thing will happen at this time. Either the sides will be reconciled or a fracture will take place. Anger guilt, anxiety and frustration are predictable and progressive stages in the pathology of conflict. Usually some attrition has taken place at every stage, but losses will rapidly increase during the frustration stage unless the situation can be reversed. In their frustration some people leave. Others will press for showdown. The result will be winners and losers. The losers will form a mass exodus.¹

Yet even at the stage of frustration there remains a possibility that the situation can be reversed. Huttenlocker observes that reconciliation is very unlikely during the anger stage, because the anger is too fresh to forgive and too close to view

¹Ibid, 22- 23.

objectively. Nor is reconciliation possible after exodus. The intervening times, however, gives reason for cautious optimism.

Guilt, anxiety and frustration are all experienced as pains, and pain is a powerful incentive for action.¹ No one likes to see a dentist, but if a toothache severe enough we are more than happy to have an appointment. Likewise, the pain that accompanies conflict pushes us to do something constructive about it, particularly if we can recognize that our opponents are suffering too.

Huttenlocker on this basis advises that it is crucial that those who serve as consultants have skills to help all those embroiled in conflict to acknowledge their own pain fully and to understand that their estranged brothers and sisters are also in pain.

The price of conflict resolution is, among other things, sacrifice. Those on both sides must relinquish pride, the claims of omniscience, some personal rights, the mask of self-righteousness and the compulsion to serve Christ Church by our own efforts. That is a lot to give up, but no more than is necessary to redeem one's opponents, him/herself and the local congregation. View that way, it is a small price to pay. In short the Survival Response in conflict must give way to caring.²

It follows also that while reconciling opposing sides, reconciliation is mostly possible, most successful done with caring attitude by opposing sides at the guilt, anxious and frustration stages only. Henry, Wilma J.; Mitcham, Michelle A.; Henry,

¹Brian Muldoon, *The System of conflict* (New York: The Berkley Publishing Group, 1996), 141.

²Muldoon, 141.

Lynette M. advise that when persons in conflict are obviously angry, it would be advantageous to let them “cool down” before addressing the situation directly.¹

Approaches to Conflict

When we have resolved the mystery surrounding a church conflict, we are prepared to solve the conflict itself. That is, when we understand the cause and the nature of the conflict, we can address each contributing fact. Just how we address those factors, of course, is crucial to the success of our-conflict resolution efforts.

When confronted with conflict, three cause of action are open to us:

- i. Avoidance,
- ii. Conflict management or (accommodation-characterized with concern for preserving relationship).²
- iii. Conflict resolution.³

The systems of conflict (emotion and mentality of conflict) discussed in the preceding subtitle above usually determine which option we choose to employ and unless kept under control, are even more likely to corrupt our exercise of that option.

Depending on the circumstances one option may be more appropriate than either of the other two. It is conceivable that one, two or even all three of the options are impossible. It is expedient to consider which response may be possible and which one may be correct for the present situation. Hittenlocker observes that it is crucial to examine what our motives is for favouring one response over another. He notes

¹Henry, Wilma J. “Conflict Resolution Strategies Adopted from Parenting Coordination: Assisting High-Conflict Co-parenting Students,” *Journal of College Counselling*, Jul2013, Vol. 16 Issue 2, p176-190, accessed 17 September 2014.

²Lewis, 77.

³Huttenlocker, 28.

further that if our reason for selecting a particular response is not worthy we are not likely to be pleased with the results of that choice. Castellano, R.; Velotti, P.; Crowell, J.; Zavattini, G. group these responses into two-cooperative strategies (Integrating and Compromising) and non-cooperative strategy (Dominating and Avoiding).¹

Conflict Avoidance

It is generally said to be the most dubious response to a potential conflict. There are many reasons why conflict avoidance is practiced. This includes: Low Priority, Short Term, Risk, Pain, Despair, and Guilty²

Low Priority. Situations that are only slightly bothersome usually do not motivate us to do much about them. Unless they grow worse we may ignore them indefinitely. We cannot engage in conflict over every problem that surfaces,³ life would be unbearably complex if we did. Forbearing with one another is something to consider.

Forbearing though golden, has two cautions to take into consideration. First, those with whom we share the problem may be more aroused about it than we are. Our apparent indifference may appear to be insensitivity or rejection. For example, a problem may seem larger to a pastor since it is so integrally related to his life's work. However, that problem may seem marginal to the laity since only a small percentage

¹Castellano R. "The Role of Parents' Attachment Configurations at Childbirth on Marital Satisfaction and Conflict Strategies," *Journal of Child & Family Studies*. Aug 2014, Vol. 23 Issue 6, 1011-1026, accessed 9 September 2014, <http://link.springer.com/article/10.1007%2Fs10826-013-9757-7>.

²Huttenlocker, 29-30.

³"How should conflict in the church be handled?" accessed 12 February 2014, <http://www.gotquestions.org/church-conflict.html#ixzz3RbwxEJwb>.

of time is invested in the matter. If the pastor is motivated to solve the problem and the laity are not, the pastor may be frustrated and possibly angry.

A second caution is that we are not always honest with ourselves. We simply rationalize because we have strong reasons for avoiding conflict than we are willing to admit. Surely, if a problem stays on our minds and persistently disturbs us, we cannot say it is low priority concern. We need to deal with it.¹

Short Term. A problem of a brief duration may be left alone unless there are long term consequences. Huttenlocker notes that problems frequently arise in the church which, although currently unpleasant, will soon pass. It is better to ignore them than to create a long-term problem by unnecessary confrontation.²

Risk. There are always risks in conflict. Sometimes the stakes are high. Sparks may fly. One pastor inherited a major problem when he moved into a new pastorate. The problem had been so well camouflaged that he didn't even know that it existed. He felt that he was moving into an ideal situation. When the problem was exposed, he was told that it had been long standing and that both the former pastor and key lay leaders had avoided dealing with it. The pastors attempt to solve the conflict but only made the matters worse.³

Though the problem was eventually solved, the pastor felt it necessary to relocate. Rightly or wrongly, his predecessor weighed the risks and decided not to do it. Those with whom we are in conflict may retaliate with an instant rebuke, gossip or some other response. After all if threatened, they may be as likely as we to embrace

¹Huttenlocker, 29.

²Ibid.

³Ibid. , 29, 30.

the systems of conflict, whether emotional or mental. We may lose a valued friend or at the very least, create a distance between us. That is, we may make the situation worse.

Pain. We are all too aware of the pain that conflict can bring. Even if exposing it does not lead to outright hostility, it could produce interaction that would be hurtful to others and to us. It is not easy to tell others, especially those who are dear, how they are offending us. It certainly is not easy to hear from them what our responsibility for that may be, or how we have offended them.¹

Despair. Sometimes we avoid conflict because we have lost hope of improving the situation. “It wouldn’t do any good,” if we reply to those who urge us to take action. This may be a correct conclusion, however it should be drawn only after we have tried intently to effect change.²

Guilty. Perhaps the greatest deterrent to dealing with conflicts in the church is guilt. Neither our theology nor our conscience will permit us to have a disagreement. We may have it in our heads that it is unchristian to complain. Did Jesus not tell us to “turn the other cheek”? Yes, he did. Yet conflict can be faced with gentleness and meekness of Christ. Guilt should be present in our conflict when our cause is unjust or our behaviour is unkind.³

While there is usually a price to pay for facing up to our conflicts, there is also a price for avoiding them. Integrity is lost. Our self-respect suffers when we allow ourselves to be poorly treated and yet pretend that such treatment is acceptable.

¹Ibid. , 30.

²Ibid.

³Ibid. , 30, 31.

Furthermore, our friendship with those who have offended us becomes phony if we cover up the problem. Then the intimacy is lost. The closeness that we so highly value in church suffers when we refuse to acknowledge the differences. The warmth goes out of our fellowship even if we continue to call each other brother and sister. *Koinonia* is replaced with tolerance. We can only be close to those with whom we are open and honest.¹

Finally, conflict avoidance tends to prevent any chance of improving a situation that is vital to us. Old practices and patterns remain unchanged. Failure and futility are unchallenged. The pain lingers. The wrong reigns. Personal and perhaps numerical growth is hindered. Any or all of this is a high price to pay for doing nothing. Huttenlocker cautions that conflict avoidance is not an acceptable approach to conflict if the problems are of a significant magnitude or continuing duration. Besides the problem it does not solve, it creates its own problems. It is in most cases a short term solution at best.

Conflict Management

Conflict management is an attempt to coexist with a problem or problematic persons through intentional device that maintains conflict within an acceptable limits. In contrast to conflict avoidance which leaves one feeling as a powerless victim of circumstances, conflict management assumes some little control over the situation. Unlike conflict avoidance, conflict management can have integrity, preserve intimacy, and effect at least some (not great) improvement. This is possible because conflict management denies neither the reality of the problem nor one's feeling about it. Conflict management is active not passive and it is what we have to settle for when

¹Ibid. ,31.

conflict resolution is not possible.¹ Although we would prefer to overcome the problem, that seems not to be an option, at least for the moment. So we decide how best to live with the problem.

Ideally, conflict management involves dialogue with those with whom the problem exists, although this will not always occur. In fact it may be that in discussion with those persons we mutually conclude that resolution of the problem is beyond us for the present, so we will in good faith work toward conflict management.

In a case where a senior and associate pastor work situation is unrest, unfulfilling and the associate feel completely dominated by the seniors and does not know what to do, the associate's options include: seek another position (possible only with great work experience, relocate to attend school- if the necessary factors are favouring, staying and accepting the frustration of the situation and commit to conflict management- possible if other goodies (good salary and good relationship with majority persons) are available to compensate for the frustrations.²

Conflict management usually involves coming to an understanding of the problem and to agreeing how the respective parties are going to relate to one another. This may mean that some activities are not going to be shared, or that some decisions will be the exclusive prerogative of one side or the other or that certain subjects will not be discussed. Change in bylaws or job descriptions may assist in establishing legitimate boundaries. A growing respect for each other's uniqueness and acceptance of each other's perspective are essential also.

¹Ibid. , 32.

²Ibid.

Conflict management is usually a tentative arrangement, since with an ongoing problem it is always possible that the truce or ceasefire or peace or respite will be broken. Our tolerance for conflict management is limited, prompting us to take action eventually, whether wise or unwise. Yet we should make no apology for conflict management when it is the best we can do under the circumstances. Neither should we resent those who seem to deprive us of our greater desire.¹

Conflict Resolution

Conflict is good, must be confronted and should be solved.² People who view conflict as inherently bad are the ones whose response to conflict is to avoid or manage it. Conflict resolution should always be our objective. It means conflict resolved; it is over. It is past tense; normalcy has returned.

Conflict resolution is made hard by seeking it simplistically. This is so when it is expected too quickly or sought by unproductive means. That notwithstanding, not all conflicts end with a shout of “Hallelujah!” Some end with an angry cry of “foul!” or a curse of denunciation or soft whine of pain. In other words, there are two kinds of conflict resolution malignant and creative.³

Malignant Conflict Resolution. A malignant disease is one that is out of control or one that is hard to control. It follows that a malignant conflict resolution mode is a mode that won't bear fruits or that will quite (if it does succeed) struggle to bear fruits. It is very distractive and can be very fatal

¹Ibid. , 33.

²Stob, 356-357.

³Huttenlocker, 33.

Malignant attempts at a conflict resolution focuses on the problem makers rather than the problem. This attempts seek to bring the opposing party into voluntary compliance or failing that involuntary submission. If either is unachieved, malignant attempts for resolution, they usually press for expulsion. When any of this is accomplished, the conflict is said to be resolved. It has, however, been resolved at a price of the devastation of the body. Chances are that problems yet to be dealt with will resurface at later time and stir another conflict.

Malignant conflict resolution is one-sided, it seeks to absolve one's own side from all fault, and moves irresistibly toward a win/lose conclusion. It is characterised by mistrust and manipulation.¹ The atmosphere is full of threats partly because of rhetoric and partly because of secrete strategies. When the conflict is finally resolved, that is, when frustrations and tensions are no longer bearable, the slow attrition and the eventual mass exodus have severely disabled the congregation as the amputation of a leg. Because it ignores root causes, malignant conflict resolution rewards combativeness (mentality of conflict), not improvement.²

Creative Conflict Resolution. Creative conflict resolution is an effort to resolve a conflict by focusing on the problem bringing about the conflict and not on the person with whom the conflict is. Kristin calls it positive problem solving approach, where the person with whom the conflict is, is treated with empathy.³ It seeks to diminish the problem bringing about the conflict and not the person with

¹Ibid.

²Ibid. , 34.

³Kristin M. Perrone, "Conflict Resolution Strategies" *Applied Psychophysiology & Biofeedback* 39, March 2014, Vol. 39 Issue 1, 19-2, accessed 9 July 2014, <http://link.springer.com/article/10.1007%2Fs10484-013-9237-2#page-2>.

whom the conflict is. It determines to terminate problem bring about the conflict and not to demonize the person with whom the conflict is. It is like a genesis, produces a new beginning out of a mist of confusion, it forms a bright future.

Creative conflict resolution focuses on the problem. It seeks to understand the perspective of one's opponents and to empathize with their distress. It seeks negotiation rather than preconceived solutions. It seeks preservation of the fellowship rather than self-defence. It seeks reconciliation rather than oppression. It accepts responsibility in the problem and seeks partnership in overcoming it. It is characterized by objectivity, charity, trust, honesty, amenability and openness. It strives relentlessly for a win/win solution. Conflict that is resolved creatively usually is not followed with a recurrence, but deepened intimacy and goodwill.¹

Creative conflict resolution is possible wherever there is willingness to work together toward rebuilding trust and vitality.

Working on Conflict Resolution Together

Whether the conflict has resulted because ours is a conflict- prone church, variant dynamics or many other isolated conflict causers, whether it is personality-centred or it is principle-centred one, the situation can only improve if we are willing to work on the problem together.²

A large church, blessed with an excellent ministerial team and an extraordinarily gifted laity, seemed not to be living up to its potential. Both the senior minister and the lay leaders felt the frustration. Soon or later someone would be blamed. An expert was employed to help the congregation to assess its situation and

¹Huttenlocker, 34, 35.

²Ibid. , 93.

to properly organize for its mission in the decade ahead. The chairperson of the church council said to the senior minister, “wherever we are, we got here together, and wherever it is we want to go, we’ll get there together.”

That is precisely the kind of shared ownership of the existing problems every congregation needs. Whether the problem seems attributable to members of the congregation, to the pastor or the situation in which they are thrown together, those problems are neither the pastor’s alone nor is the congregation’s alone. Neither is to bear all guilty, and neither is singularly responsible for improving matters. There is no perfect match between pastors and congregations, because there is no perfect pastor and there is not perfect congregations. There is simply no perfect situations. Neither fight nor flight is an acceptable caring response to those imperfections, wherever they are found. There is “a more excellent way.”

If we are to have developing pastors, healthy congregations, and enduring pastor- parish relationships, it will be necessary for both pastors and congregations to:

Become accountable to one another,
Provide for each other’s care, and
Assume responsibility for their shared problems.¹

Each problem will need to be addressed and dealt with individually. Although problems are usually interrelated, dealing with more than one at a time tends to confuse the process and may open the way for one problem to be cited as an excuse for another or to direct attention away from the other.

Problems related to variant dynamics will not be solved by attacking or dismissing the pastor. The problems are inherent to the congregation or to the environment surrounding the congregation. Assuming the pastor is at fault for any or all the problems is simplistic thinking. Whether forced or voluntary pastor’s

¹Ibid. , 94.

transfer/resignation will not suffice as a quick fix. Indeed it may only serve to reinforce an unhealthy patterns of pastors-parish relationship and perpetuate a series of short term pastorates. Although it may serve a closed power system or serve as a sacrificial lamb to prescriptive expectations, it evades the root cause of the problem.¹

There was a congregation, which from a distance, appeared rather close to Ideal. But allegedly, over the course of many years, several powerful members silently forced the transfer of one pastor after another. As you would expect, in each case certain prescriptive expectations, whether of performance or style were not met. After three years, the latest pastor was told to leave. Unlike his predecessors, he refused. An ugly battle ensued. The congregation suffered heavy losses; the pastor stayed, while most of his critics left. A closed power system was broken up. This is a tragic example of not working on the problem together. It is a classic example of hateful conflict resolution.

After appreciating the significance of working on the conflict problem bringing together, then we can begin to tackle every identified problem one by one. To begin with, let's tackle conflict brought about by variant dynamics in church conflicts.

Variant Dynamics in Church Conflicts

Variant Dynamics in church conflict are things and not personalities that each alone are capable of precipitating crisis temporarily or chronically that threaten its unity and even its very existence. Four such dynamics are:

Community Change. Community change is not a new problem. Together, the pastor and the congregation must plan for their strategy for facing the future, relying

¹Ibid.

on the finest resource available to them. Level of expectations regarding the congregation's size may need to be scaled down. Measurements of success may need to be changed. Mission objectives may need to be altered.

Financial Stress. Financial stress is perhaps the easiest of all congregational problems to be solved. Most congregations have the monetary resource to meet their operation. It is just a matter of enlisting the support of members who are capable of giving more (in some cases much more) than they do at present. Seldom is this done by continual hand-wringing or haranguing attendees to give more. This tactic may work occasionally in response to a bona fide emergency. However, if resorted to consistently, they will prove counterproductive. They create a climate of depression in the congregation and build-up resistance to appeals. They are likely to drive people away, further depleting the giving base.

What is more effective is to accentuate the positive. If the congregation is favoured with fine facilities, why not celebrate that fact rather than bemoaning the indebtedness? Gratitude for a facility makes it easy to give toward debt retirement. Every congregation is engaged in ministry of one kind or another; what better incentive for giving, to support that ministry, especially in its productivity! Every congregation provides worship services; if they are inspiring nurturing experiences, they can be cited as good reason for giving. The fund-raising message that gains a positive response is, "Look what you are giving makes possible!" One congregation learned this concept as a result of sending two of its finance committee members to a stewardship conference. They came home excited. They tried it. It worked!

It is also helpful to provide the congregation with visual aids to make the budget clear. Graphics such as financial "pies" and bar graphs of the distribution of the monies work well. This accountability to the congregation is also excellent

promotion. All budgets must be based on strong commitment to mission and local programming, not just self-serving, in-house keeping concerns. Giving always requires a little honest romance, something to get excited about. Keeping all the money all for ourselves does not inspire sacrificial giving. A congregation too poor to reach out will only get poorer. Selfless priority needs to be maintained.

Although the pastor's role in stewardship promotion is absolutely strategic, he or she must not gain reputation as an emotionally charged fund-raiser. Nor should the pastor assume the sole responsibility of stewardship promotion and fund-raising. Every congregation should have a financial committee (the title may vary) whose responsibility is to develop the budget and promote its subscription. The pastor should not be required to bear alone; the concern rightfully falls on everyone.

Sometimes a congregation does well to secure the services of an outside Fund-raiser who is an expert in his/her field. This should be a person of high reputation in both character and method. It is penny wise and pound foolish for congregations to attempt major fundraising on their own. Usually a fraction of the needed is raised and the potential to do much better will have been spoiled.

Congregations facing very difficult financial circumstances should consult financial experts in creative financing or refinancing. The congregation that feels powerless to do anything about its plight must first be rescued from that sense of powerlessness. Actions must become the order of the day, thus improving morale as a first step toward long-range solutions. Again it is imperative to deal with reputable, licensed persons and firms. Desperation is never reason for acting unscrupulously or dealing with people on the fringe of competency or respectability.

Not to be overlooked is the importance of good-book keeping and sound methods for accounting and depositing offerings. Vouchers should be required for all cheque writing.

Conflict resulting from financial stress can be avoided provided the crisis is well-managed. This means vigorously promoting good stewardship, publicising the congregations' most exciting ministries, and in some cases, enlisting outside experts.¹

Closed Power System. Closed power systems must be recognized wherever they exist. This should certainly not be done in an accusatory way. It probably is not a place of one person, including the pastor, to announce that such a system controls the congregation. This would almost surely evoke a negative response. It might even be a false conclusion. It is better for the congregation, perhaps with the pastor's encouragement and certainly with concurrence of all church leaders to launch an in-depth self-study.

Surveys can be used to provide hard data on the distribution of offices among members of the congregation, the length of terms of the present office holders, the ratio of old and newer members on the board and committees and the like.

Questionnaires can be used to determine how highly involved-and-influential members feel about where control of the congregation is lodged. Rather than asking for simple yes and no answers on a questionnaire it is better to provide for a choice of responses ranging from "strongly agree" to strongly disagree." Issues such as whether members feel their opinions are respected by the leaders of the church and whether they are satisfied with the way decisions are made are typical of those to be explored.²

¹Ibid. , 98.

²Ibid.

This point is to allow the self-study to make evident the presence of a closed power system, if in fact one does exist. Results of the study will have to be interpreted and may not be totally conclusive. Yet this is the best place to begin; it is the fairest and the least dangerous approach to an admittedly potentially explosive problem. Sometime an outside expert may be used. Either to help in development of self-study or its interpretation. Such an expert can also be invaluable in offering alternatives to the present system.

We should anticipate that parties to the closed power system will feel rather defensive about the problem. More likely they view themselves as church saviours (which they may be), not liability. Nonetheless, lay leaders who are unwilling to allow the pastor the latitude necessary to be an effective leader must be gently confronted with their error. Such persons should either alter their manner of functioning or step aside to allow for amenable persons the opportunity to form creative working relationships with the pastor. The pastor should not be the person to call for such change. It should come about voluntarily through a demographic process or through recommendation of an outside source, the third opinion being the last resort.

The demise of a closed power system is always best accomplished in an atmosphere of trust. Therefore the pastor and others outside the system need to be trust builders.¹ This means they will not only refrain from threats and competition, but also demonstrate care toward persons in the system. It means that, given the opportunity they will demonstrate commitment and competence. Thus they earn trust of those in power and, may in turn share some of the power. Cosgrove in his book *church conflict: the hidden systems behind the fights*, calls this closed power system

¹Sherwood G. Lingenfelter. *Leading Cross-Culturally, Covenant Relationship for Effective Christian Leadership* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008), 99.

closed boundaries and says that they can be defused by encouraging spatial proximity.¹ Since it is generally accepted that proximity brings liking, Cosgrove suggests that one way of clearing the difference between two opposing groups is deliberately reducing the space between them to eventually remove what actually separates them. Spatial proximity can be enhanced by playing together, for instance doing comedy, picnic recreation, games, skits, and extra together.² It is crucial that the trust building takes place simultaneously with self-study. The self-study in other words must be such that has no ulterior motives.

It may be necessary to address more than the personalities involved in the closed power system. Some changes may be called for in the congregation's organizational structure. There is always a potential problem between the pastor and lay leadership regarding control. This is true even in the finest churches. Where does the authority of the pastor begin and where does it end? What are responsibility of the pastor and what are not? The same questions apply to lay officers. One pastor came under fire because he did not make rounds of the building each evening to ensure that all the windows were closed and all door locked. The most powerful man in the church expected the pastor to do that, his predecessor had. Unfortunately nobody told the pastor until there was a theft.³

Ambiguity about authority and responsibility can cause not only gaps but also overlaps. The lay leader may feel that the pastor has invaded his turf, and the pastor may feel the lay leaders have invaded pastoral territory. To prevent conflict of this

¹Cosgrove, 134.

²Ibid. , 136.

³Huttenlocker, 100.

kind it is imperative that bylaws and job descriptions (for both the pastors and the lay leaders) make explicit where authority and responsibility begins, ends and resides. A clear understanding will eliminate continuous debate and misunderstanding that are energy draining, inefficient and potentially divisive. There must be a place for control, and control must remain in its place. It is caring to control and it is caring to define accompanying terms. Every congregation must have a closed power system, otherwise nothing will be done. The challenge is to keep that system transparent and accountable.¹ Flynn Leslie B observes that we can defuse Closed power system if we heed Paul's call to honour one another (Rom12:10) or submitting one to another (Eph.5:18-21) as a manifestation of the being filled with the Holy Spirit. He notes that under the wrong kind of spirit men become self-assertive; under the Holy Spirit's influence they serve one another.² Put in another way Moeller say all efforts need to be made to overcome control but rather pursue character.³ He explains that this is possible as and when the one in control overcome the temptation to manoeuvre, plan and manipulate to move critics from his life and ministry.⁴

Prescriptive Expectations. Prescriptive expectations can no more be tolerated than closed power systems. Yet the pastor or the layperson who is defensive about being subjected to them will make matters worse. Although we should not conform to them at the expense of personal integrity and creativity, we should not overreact to them either. The best we can do is simply to be aware of them.⁵

¹Ibid.

²Flynn, 101-108.

³Moeller, 134.

⁴Ibid. , 134-138.

⁵Huttenlocker, 101.

Prescriptive expectations often masquerade as the voice of efficiency, orthodoxy or piety. Underneath, however, they are none of these. Regardless of how right they sound to the gullible/easy-to-fool-listener, they are really case of being judgmental and legalism.¹ Within the framework of job description and the commonly accepted norms of Christian community, the pastor's performance must align with his or her capabilities; the pastor's values must align with his or her conscience before God; and the pastor's style must align with his or her true identity. After that and only after that can the pastor's performance, values and style begin to conform to the congregation's expectations. This is not to suggest that the pastors are law unto themselves, for that is arrogance. It is but to suggest that the congregations should freely give their pastors permission to be themselves from the day of arrival. Anything short of that is bondage.

The goal is not prescriptive expectations but partnership expectations. That is expectations should be negotiated between the pastor and the people. Those expectations should be satisfactory to both the pastor and the congregation. As there is partnership in establishing expectations, there should be partnership in fulfilling them. The people should consider themselves responsible for supporting the pastor in striving to meet those shared expectations. This is a most notable form of caring.²

Treatment for Antagonist

Apostle Paul pleaded with the leaders of the Christian church in Rome to take note of antagonists in the congregation:

¹Ibid.

²Ibid. , 101.

Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them who cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which you have learned; and avoid them (Rom. 16:17).

Paul did not leave to his readers' to imagine exactly who it was they were to take note of. They were to watch out for those who:

- Create dissension and cause divisions.
- Teach against the doctrine handed to them by Paul,

Paul offers that they need to

- i. Beware of them and watch out for them.
- ii. Avoid them (Matt 18:15-17 or Titus 3:10-11)

Moreover if your brother shall trespass against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone: if he shall hear you, you have gained your brother. But if he will not hear you, then take with you one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto you as a heathen man and a tax collector (Matthew 18:15-17).

A man that is divisive after the first and second admonition reject; Knowing that he that is such is perverted, and sins, being condemned of himself (Titus 3:10-11).

It follows that the way to handle conflict brought about by an antagonist is to be alert to existence of the antagonist, mark such a one, admonish the him or her up to three times and when they do not own up avoid and reject them.

Overcoming Conflict Proneness

Conflict-prone churches are not helpless. However, deliberate action must be taken to improve the spiritual and social climate of the congregation. Those

circumstances that are basically constructive and that contribute to conflict must be brought to control. Those that are not at all constructive must be overcome.¹

High Exchange. High exchange is about too frequent meetings and this could be a result of being involved in several aspect of live. This includes and is not limited to few and frequent meetings because the facility under use is inadequate in comparison to the people using it, or just many meetings necessary to achieve the church's purpose. Basit, suggests that conflict that is as result of ineffective environment can be solved by establishing and maintaining an effective environmentsfor instance, an adequate facility. Physical conditions of the facility in use should be made well, nicely maintained and the number of users to be scaled down to efficient level.²

Conflict might be avoided also by simply providing fewer opportunities for members of the congregation to gather. It is in select instance that this is advisable at least with respect to certain potentially opposing parties.

Another better alternatives to overcoming conflict-proneness is having a capacity for forbearance. A capacity for forbearance needs to be developed if high-exchange environment is going to be appositve one. Members of the congregation need to ask the Lord for and work greater charity toward one another. Peter reminds us, "above all hold unfailing love for one another (1 Pet. 4:8).³ For most of us, such

¹Ibid. , 46.

² Abdul Basit et al., "An Analysis of Conflict Resolution Strategies in Pakistani Schools," *International Journal of Academic Research*, Nov 2010, Vol. 2 Issue 6, 212-218, accessed 16 July 2014, <http://connection.ebscohost.com/c/articles/56681646/analysis-conflict-resolution-strategies-pakistani-schools>.

³Ibid. , 46.

love has to be cultivated. Yet it is absolutely essential to long-standing relationships in the church or for that matter, anywhere else.

The kind of love that covers multitude of sins is not to be confused with a hypocritical stoic attitude. But Huttenlocker says that those who have learned to accept the humanness of others are genuinely unaffected by the normal misunderstanding and disagreements that are inevitable to living in a community. Peter reports of Jesus, “When you are reviled, he did not revile in return” (Pet. 2:23). This meekness is a true mark of maturity and is contrary to those petty insecure persons who are everlastingly protecting their perceived rights and defending themselves over trifles.

Forbearance therefore, is not always the correct response to irritations. Huttenlocker notes that, sometimes, confrontation may be in order. This notwithstanding, we foolishly complicate our own lives and others’ when we feel compelled to air our concerns every time someone offends us. A wise and more Christian course is to forgive and endure wrong responses except in serious incidents that arouse true righteous indignation.

Though the later years of Saul present an insecure king Saul, when Saul had just been inaugurated as king he exhibited a love example- a secure, humble, and lovely Saul. When he was made king of Israel, a great celebration was made in his honour. So humble was he at that time that he was actually an unwilling participant. Samuel, the priest who anointed him King, proclaimed to the crowd that had gathered, “There is none like him among all the people.” And all the people shouted, long live the king!” (1 Sam 10:24). However, there was a dissenting opinion. Some “worthless fellows” asked in derision, “How can this man save us?” Even though they “brought

him no present,” Saul held his peace. High exchange need not be a problem among those who have learned to forbear.

High Involvement. It is probably safe to say that most people who participate in church conflict are highly involved persons. That high involvement has in all likelihood participated or at least contributed to their entanglement in conflict. But by no means suggest that high involvement is undesirable, unless such involvement is prompted with a wrong motivation.

Those who have made heavy investments of their energies, their money and own sense of personhood in the church are usually protective of those investments. That is the first thing to understand about parties to church conflict who have been deeply committed: they are trying to protect their investments. Now it is hard to blame them for that, isn't it? If threat to the value that these persons espouse can be diminished and if the contributions they have made can be affirmed, they will become much more agreeable to change-whether in leadership positions, programs or facilities often poses a threat to those who have been heavily involved in the past and whose involvement has helped fashion what is now to be changed. If you want to avoid conflict, find where the investments are. If you must tamper with them, do so sensitively.¹

More than this, however must be said about high involvement and church conflict. Unfortunately some persons construe their high involvement as granting the divine right to dictate every decision in the church. This can become especially problematic when other equally involved persons feel equally endowed with authority and just have a different opinion.

¹Ibid. , 50.

The only solution to this dilemma is for all involved to accept servant leadership as their style. Servant leaders do not give of themselves and their possessions in order to get their own way. They do it because they care for the recipients of church's ministry. They do not view themselves as any better than the less involved members. They are not egotistical. They do not care who gets the credit. They consider themselves servants of Christ and of his people.

When high involvement is born of a servant leadership perspective, it seldom contributes to conflict. No one is trying to protect personal territory. Nothing is sacred except the cause of Christ.¹

In his book 'Conflict and Caring' Huttenlocker tells his personal experience story that beautifully illustrates servant leadership. One day he was preaching at a church that was to vote that evening on a proposal to sell its existing facility and relocate. The pastor shared this information with him just as they were entering the sanctuary for worship. With them was the music director, an elderly man whom the pastor identified as a pillar in the church. With that introduction the man proudly informed him that he had been in the church for something like thirty years and that he had helped in the construction of that particular church. Instantly, Huttenlocker was curious. He asked him "How do you feel about selling this place?" "Oh I'm all for it," he exclaimed. "I believe we have a great future and I want us to build for it." Ah! Here was a man who practiced servant leadership! He could be trusted to be involved without stirring up trouble every time someone touched something that had his fingerprints on it.²

¹Huttenlocker, 51

²Ibid.

Low Understanding. Not everyone who offends is devilish. Some are just plain ignorant. That is, they have never acquired social graces. They do not have a sense of propriety. The only way to be spared the conflict such people are capable of creating, is to teach them relational skills. “Give them books to read, arrange conferences and seminars at your church”¹and take them to conferences and seminars on the same. Above all else, model for them the love of Jesus Christ. Treat them the way you wish they would learn to treat other. Treat other that way in their presence, insists Huttenlocker.

In his book *Conflict and Caring* Huttenlocker tells a story that one of his church members once told him. “You and ____ (the associate pastor) choose your words so carefully”. “I’m trying to learn that.” And learn he did. Though Huttenlocker, was sure that the church member would be the first to say that he was still too quick to speak, he admired how the church member broadened his understanding.

Low Respect. It is argued that respect can never be commanded.² It must always be earned. Pastors and lay leaders of the church must earn the respect of church members. They must be honest, capable, humble and caring. On the other hand, following others is an art to be cultivated. A good example is found in Harry Truman who, even though he was a Democrat, always honoured the office of the president even when a Republican occupied that office. Supportive officers must be taught how to respect those who lead them, not to hold them in contempt until overpowering evidence demands that they do otherwise.

¹Ibid. , 52.

²Ibid.

Respect is a mutual thing. If supportive staff are to respect their leaders, their leaders must respect them. Conversely, if the leaders are to respect their supportive staff, those persons must respect their leaders. Therefore if you do not get any respect, instead of demanding some, give some. This is the Godly response.¹

After Saul was crowned king of Israel, he led the army to a victory over the dreaded ammonites. In a sense this vindicated him. Because of Saul's heroics, some Israelites wanted to execute the critics who had previously derided him. Saul quickly quieted any such move. It was time for Saul to cement respect by giving some, even to his critics.

Low Trust. In an age of instant results we are inclined to expect instant trust. We flippantly enjoin one another: "Trust me!" sometimes in the very aftermath of some trust-braking episode. However more assurance than this needs to be done. Trust is like an oak tree. It grows slowly, but when it reached maturity it is very strong. There is usually a kind of instant trust that exists in church. Christians are presumed to be trustworthy. Therefore most of us enter the fellowship of the church predisposed to trust our brothers and sisters. That trust, however, is often shallow and superficial. It is often naive in that it fails to take into consideration the humanness of those who surround us in the body of Christ. Such instant trust has never been substantiated by anything beyond the general reputation of church members. All this tends to make trust fragile. It can be broken by the first instance of conflict.

Members of a conflict-prone church will enjoy little instant trust. Once such might have existed, but now it has been broken and it will not be restored either

¹Ibid.

quickly or easily. However as sure as great oak tree grows from little to a corns, trust can yet grow to become even taller and stronger than before.

Trust Building

Hettenlocker says that above every church's alter, stretching from one side of the church to the other is an imaginary banner emblazoned with bold letters that reads either Trust or Distrust. Huttenlocker adds that upon entering for worship, every member of the church is aware of the banner. It takes the visitors a little longer to detect it, but they soon do. It's message will have a lot to do with whether or not they become members. Wherever trust has been shattered or the absence of it is a contributing factor.

That tone-setting banner at the front of the church mean a lot in relationship with progress or no progress for the church.¹ It means that either goodwill or ill will is the prevailing spirit in that place. The banner describes the nature of relationships within that congregation. It simply declares what is an accomplished fact: the members either consider one another trust worthy or they do not. They either have a friendly environment or a hostile one, a nurturing place or an intimidating one.

Who strings the banner across the front of the church? Is it the Pastor who put it there? The pastor certainly helps. Is it the head elder and board member who put it there? "Yes, they help too". Actually, everyone who is part of that fellowship contributes to the content of the banner.² Together they determined whether it will read TRUST or DISTRUST. Even though they may not realise it or approve it.

¹Ibid. , 54.

²Ibid. , 55.

Everyone is responsible to build trust just as everyone can contribute to destroying trust.

All good things in the church begin with trust. Worship is more inspiring when the banner reads TRUST. Evangelism is enhanced when banner says TRUST. Enlistment comes easier when the banner declares TRUST. So does fund raising. So does acceptance of new programs and new ideas. Where there is trust there is readiness to venture. Where there is distrust everyone stands braced for trouble and expecting the worst.

Wherever conflict exists, either trust has been shattered or the absence of it was a contributing factor. Since presumably the majority of us prefer the banner across the front of the church to read TRUST, the following need to be done to accomplish that.

Affirmation

Trust is generated when we affirm one another. Lewis Douglass calls it “Helping others to feel better about themselves.”¹ He says persons and organizations manage conflict best when they are feeling good about themselves. We are made in such a way to require the admiration of others. We never feel adequately validated until we are affirmed by those who are close to us, those who are our significant others. Affirmation is one of the most needed ministries in the church, as it is in all other communities (especially the home). It is a ministry every member can provide to every other member. We instinctively trust those who affirm us. We see them as allies, as kind-hearted and loving.

¹Lewis, 49.

In some congregations the people appear to eye each other with suspicion. The atmosphere in such congregation is like that in a large apartment dwelling- strangers coming and going but never really becoming neighbours. There is little trust among church members who treat each other impersonally. Indifference to each other is mutually demeaning. One pastor's wife said, "There is no one in the church I consider my friend. I would just leave." She was not talking about hostility; she was talking about indifference. Trust only develops when we are valued as persons rather than objects.

Trust flourishes where genuine affection is found, where people visibly enjoy one another and seem reluctant to go home after worship. Trust thrives on compliments. It thrives on praise.¹ People who often come to worship services or other meetings of the church also need some positive reinforcement. Perhaps it has been a hard day at work or harsh words have been spoken at home. When one feels like a failure or suffers rejection, what a gift it is to be valued by fellow Christian!

Huttenlocker in his book *Conflict Resolution and Caring* tells an illustration about a certain small congregation he loves to visit because the members were so positive. Several of the members had come from a church in which the pastor was very negative, but in this new congregation they were thriving on their new found freedom. They excelled at praising God and were equally good at affirming one another. Their affirmation does not foster cliques, it seems that anyone was welcome.²

Acceptance

¹Huttenlocker, 56.

²Ibid.

Trust is generated when we accept one another. The more unconditional the acceptance, the more the trust. Trust grows where there is freedom to disagree, to question, to doubt, to bear one's faults, and to admit one's limitations. Acceptance builds trust. Being judgemental builds distrust. We are most comfortable around those who are unpretending, who seem more unaccomplished than clear.

Trust is facilitated when all are free to own their humanness. When everyone stands on the same ground, there is no room for pretence. There is, instead, room for honesty. There is the courage to confess our sins. There is a desire to undergird one another as fellow pilgrims. We trust those who want to grow with us, who have nothing to hide, and who are as eager to learn as they were the first day they joined the church.

Where there is trust, there is a questing spirit. Where there is distrust, there is a quenching spirit. Churches dominated by the former spirit are dynamic; whereas those dominated by the latter are static. Where the former spirit exists, persons are concerned with being productive. Where the latter exists, persons are concerned with being proper.

Acceptance includes but is not limited to church services being friendly to the physically challenged persons and affirmation of them for whatever little contribution they give to the church's success.¹

Support

Trust is generated when we provide support. Words of encouragement, especially during periods of adversity are essential to building strong bonds of fellowship. From the beginning, the Christian community has been marked by strong

¹Ibid. , 57.

commitment of believers to one another. The motto “all for one and one for all” is no longer within the church. Wherever commitment is demonstrated, community is strengthened. Recipients of care feel that they have found an authentic, abiding fellowship.

Such commitment is not found in all congregations, or at least not uniformly experienced by all members. Those who feel excluded from the support of their brothers and sisters are likely to feel like outsiders. No amount of compliment will mean much if they are not backed up by commitment.¹ The outsiders will only say of the insiders, “They really do not care about me. They only look out for themselves. They are no different from the rest of the society.” These remarks are expressions of distrust. They are laments that care has not been provided when badly needed.

Trust resides where one is able to say, “You were there when I needed you.” Such a statement is a testimonial of the credibility of the church. Relationships are cemented at crisis as at no other time. Never miss an opportunity to provide support. It may not come again.²

In a congregation where there is distrust independency prevails. Everyone stands alone. However, in a congregation where there is trust, interdependence prevails. The members know that they are not isolated. They look to one another for support: sometimes giving, sometimes receiving. When the threats of conflict arise, it is not easy to turn one’s back on those who have been faithful friends. Only fools fail to value and provide support system.³

¹Ibid. , 58.

²Ibid.

³Ibid. ,59.

Integrity

Trust is generated when we demonstrate integrity. Nothing is more elementary to trust than simple honesty, truthfulness and decency. Character is always an inevitable key element in trust. It is possible to enjoy company with people and not trust them. It is possible to have people whose ability you admire but do not trust them. It is possible to have people who have been very good to you but you do not trust them. When it comes to trust, absolutely nothing substitutes for integrity.¹

There are persons in the church-not many, thank God- whose religion is more than their ethics. In fact they seem not to make any connection between ethics and religion. They quote scripture with a saintly face and lie with a straight face. They can shout like a saint and swear like a sailor. They can weep like a saint and reap like scrooge. They can wave a dollar bill over the collection plate and cheat thousands on income tax. They can rave about immorality and cheat on their spouses. Trust them not on your life.

There are also less flagrant indiscretions which also destroy integrity. They include and are not limited to:

Gossip. Trust is destroyed when we gossip. Those to whom we gossip read it for what it is: a lack of integrity. Persons who cannot keep confidences lack fidelity and they do not deserve to be trusted. Moreover the recipients of gossip, whether they relish hearing it or not, live thereafter in treasured fear that they will be discussed likewise. That prospect keeps the silent about their fear, faults and failures. No one reveals very much in the presence of a peddler.

¹Ibid. , 60.

More than we realize, most of us form opinion of others based on what they talk about, whom they talk about and how, and when and where they do their talking. All relate to whether or not these persons are trustworthy friends.¹ When we are overheard talking about someone else, or when we reveal with pleasure how we put someone in his place, trust leaves. Trust is based on protecting relationships. It is based on guarding each person's dignity and reputation. It is not your job to confess another person's sins. There are instances in which we must warn others, but we should never use a supposed warning as an excuse for idle talk.

Ridicule. Trust is also destroyed with ridicule, whether of those present or absent. Ridicule shows a fundamental lack of respect for persons.²

Keeping Promises and Honouring Agreements

Trust is also built when we keep promises and honour agreements. It is crucial that you do what you said you will do-DWYSYWD. Trust suffers when we violate that simple principle. Trust and reliability go together.

Respect

Trust is generated when we respect opponents. We normally do not think of conflict as a trust-building time. On the contrary, it is viewed as a trust-damaging time. Certainly trust is at high risk during periods of conflict. Yet, if in the midst of serious disagreement we demonstrate high regard for each other, trust will emerge stronger than ever. After all how we deal with each other in conflict is the acid test of

¹Ibid.

²Ibid. , 61.

our fellowship and of our professed Christianity. If we are what we ought to be and if the church is what it says it is, we are under great constraint to work out our differences peaceably. This is true of the church more than any other earthly community.¹

Trust that has survived conflict is based on a much more stable foundation than mere pleasant acquaintance. When we have demonstrated respect for one another, refusing to allow the mentality of conflict (righteousness of the cause and the drive to survive) to come between us, our relationship is fortified by compelling evidence that each is trustworthy. Our relationship rises to new level of authenticity.

The cause, one of the many, why conflict so often divide the church and sever a once-beautiful relationship, sometimes, is because of lack of communication skills to discuss issues and feelings in a non-inflammatory way.

Conflict is a time for plain talk. Talks may be plain without being punitive. Plain is permissible; punitive is not. Anytime we begin assailing another we have moved from former to latter. To respect opponents is to avoid assaulting them verbally and physically. Hettenlocker provides the motor that “fight if you must, but please remember even when this get hottest, that your opponent is still a human being.”

Regard one another. Keep foremost in mind that the person whom you are angry with is still one of God’s children. Each person has rights and feelings. Regardless of the source or the nature of conflict, we should remain conscious of our opponents’ well-being, neither treating them maliciously nor allowing our allies to do so. Our opponents’ position or transgression never gives us license to sin against

¹Ibid.

them. Were that the case, where would each one of us be with God. To respect an opponent is to care for him or her. Christ said, our task is to love our enemy.¹

Confrontation is unavoidable in conflict resolution. What may be avoidable are adverse results of unkind and unwise confrontation. He adds that conflict does not divide us; our failure to respect one another in conflict is what divides us. Apostle Paul insists that confrontation must be with respect and care for the one being confronted.

Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such a one in the spirit of meekness.... (Gal. 6:1).²

We need to be sensitive when we address both persons and issues. In doing so we may avoid power struggles, face-saving debates and other psychological games that complicate conflict resolution. Our business is never to diminish one another but to diminish the differences between us. It is crucial to keep issues before us and animosity behind us.³

It is appropriate to testify to our position. It is seldom appropriate to dictate to others what their position must be. For instance, while Peter and John were on trial, Peter declared, "Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you rather than God, you must judge". Peter did not dictate to Caiaphas what the high priest's position should be. But Peter did indicate what the apostles' position was: "We cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard (acts 4:19-20)." It may have been Peter's respect for his opponents that led to the apostles' release, even though there was no

¹Ibid. , 62.

²"How should conflict in the church be handled?" accessed 12 March 2014, <http://www.gotquestions.org/church-conflict.html>.

³Huttenlocker, 63.

compromise in. Because communication is so strategic to trust building, consequently to conflict resolution, it is the subject of discussion in the next sub-topic.

Communication

After having examined how communication is instrumental in conflict menace, we will here look at the role of communication in conflict resolution.

However, just as communication serves conflict, it can also serve conflict resolution. Just as there cannot be open conflict without conversation. It is therefore, imperative to practice communication skills that promote accord, not discord.¹

i. Good Communication Promotes Dialogue

A heavy agenda always goes with the task of conflict resolution. There are feelings to be soothed, issues to resolve. That takes a lot of talking. Any remarks that serve to terminate dialogue will thwart the process.² And much as we may not predict what others response will be, even before we speak we do well to ask, will what am about to say bring forth a useful response.³

- a. Communication that promote dialogue does not speak the final on a debatable subject.

When we speak harsh tones that imply there is nothing left for others to say, they may say nothing! That does not mean that the discussion is ended; positions on both sides remain fixed. It is better to speak our position clearly, but only as an opinion, not the law. This allows others to set forth their opinion as no more than that.

¹Cosgrove, 151-176.

²Stob, 356.

³Duncom Centre for Conflict Resolution, “Resolving Church Conflicts”, accessed 13 May 2014, <http://www.mediate.com/ccr/pg41.cfm>.

Thereby, the stage is set to continue the dialogue in quest of agreement or at least amicable disagreement.

- b. Communication that furthers dialogue does not push others into silence.

Harsh or insulting remarks either intimidate or enrage. Those who are intimidated keep their silence. Those who are enraged seek revenge. In either case, dialogue is derailed and any chance of working out differences is lost. It is better to speak with courtesy so as to invite feedback that may lead to meeting of the mind and hearts.

- c. Good communication promotes open dialogue.

The fact that two or more people are talking is not enough to ensure that progress is being made. Hidden messages are not helpful to dialogue; they are counterproductive. They cause missed connections. Person A does not really say what he means. However, person B responds to what he hears, missing the point that needs to be addressed. Nothing good, of course comes of what person B says. This frustrates him and blocks the resolution of the problem. It is better, then, to speak in a forthright manner. It takes more courage to do this, but it is decidedly more helpful. That is the difference between making a conversation and making an honest dialogue.

- Communication that promotes open dialogue does not leave others powerless, forcing them to resort to psychological game.

It is common in conflict for one side to gang up on the other. The weight of prevailing opinion can be used to pressure those in minority. In that case, those in the minority are powerless to alter the situation as long as they operate by conventional means. Sometimes the weight of an office, such as that of a pastor or board's chairperson, can be sought to bear on those in subservient positions. This renders them likewise

powerless as long as they operate by conventional means. This persons sometimes resorts to unconventional means, namely psychological games. Games become difficult to control and power thereby tends to become equalized.¹ It is better for those initially possessed with power to use it with enough restraint to preclude the necessity of games. This will protect the openness of dialogue and thus facilitate reaching agreement.²

- Communication that further open dialogue does not leave others needlessly fearful about what our response will be.

In the midst of fear they are likely to feel us with questions that skirt the sensitive issues. In that case we misunderstand them. It is better to be consistently approachable so that problems or potential problems can be addressed promptly and honestly.

A story is told of a pastor who had a number of critics, and he complained that none of their criticism was coming directly to him. He said “Iam here. They know they can talk to me”. Oh, they knew where he was all right. Experience had taught them that he always made them to pay whenever they confronted him. Whenever this is the case, the conflict cannot be solved until the element of intimidation is removed.

¹Kale, 87

²Kale, 101-102.

ii. Good Communication Deescalates Tension

Much communication escalates tension by being defensive or hateful. It amounts to swinging back. Proverbs 15:1 say, “A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger” (KJV). A soft answer is good communication because it deescalates tension.

- a. Communication that diffuses tension registers feelings but controls them.

It certainly is not necessary or even desirable to hide feelings. However in revealing our pain it is essential to avoid overreaction. Those who become overemotional place others in an uncomfortable position. They are likely to feel guilty and/or annoyed. The situation takes on a crisis atmosphere that precludes rational discussion¹. Thus it is better to register discomfort, but do so in an orderly fashion. By remaining in control, others can also. Discourse can take place calmly.

- b. Communication that deescalates tension neither exaggerates nor distorts the facts.

In conflict there is always the temptation to exaggerate the facts to make opponents to appear more unreasonable or more at fault than is actually the case. There is also the temptation to distort the facts to make others appear guiltier or ourselves more innocent than is actually the case. Those whose pang of conscience will not permit them to lie are especially prone to exaggerate and to distort. Though the overstatement seems less offensive to the conscience than lying, it is equally self-serving.

¹Huttenlocker, 68.

It must be recognized that distortion and exaggeration are basically dishonest and those who are made to look bad by them will be resentful and will lose further respect for those who employ such tactics. It is better to let the facts speak for themselves. When one party acts according to this principle, others are more likely to do the same. It is always easier to resolve conflict when it is necessary to deal only with truth instead of having to sort out truth from lies.

- c. Communication that deescalates tension never says more than is meant or states more than is intended.

Sometimes in the heat of battle we are inclined to express more malice than we feel then or will feel later. We are also inclined to state as an established plan of action that which is just one opinion under consideration or perhaps even a mere fantasy. Such overstatement is another exaggeration and distortion. Saying more than we mean and stating more than we intend creates a crisis atmosphere. It may prompt our opponent to overreact if our words are taken seriously.

In his book *Conflict and Caring*, Huttenlocker gives an example of this situation. He says “After months of conflict, a dissident group announced that they might take legal action against the pastor. Nearly panic stricken, he rushed to get the services of an attorney. At the first mention of a mere possibility, the atmosphere changed. The enemy loomed larger than ever.¹

Actually, saying more than we mean and stating more than we intend is an indication of powerlessness. It is an obvious clue that we have no power except from empty pronouncements. When seen for what it is, this importance only brings scorn from opponents.

¹Ibid. , 69.

Whether our scare techniques work or not, they do more harm than good in regard to resolving conflict. It is better to avoid all theatrics. Inform others of only true feelings and honest intentions. How they react, of course, is up to them, but they will have been correctly informed.

iii. Good communication furthers objective dialogue

Whenever dialogue is subjective, the chances of escalating conflict increases. Objective dialogue will usually make more sense and be less volatile than that which is subjective. Communication that furthers objectivity does not deal in generalities or vagueness. To accuse another of “always doing that” or of “acting just like a man” leaves that person with nothing substantive to respond to and feelings of frustration. It is always best to adhere to issues.

Communication that furthers objective dialogue does not add extraneous matters, such as relatives or past offences. Extraneous matters are invariably interjected to either ridicule or indict or entrap. Whatever the case, the results will be negative. Of course extraneous matters can be used for defensive as well as objective purposes. In the latter instance, they are used to direct attention away from oneself or away from one’s case, which happens to be weak. Again they preclude open, objective dialogue¹

iv. Good Communication Strives to Solve the Problems, Not to Prosecute

a. Force invariably leads to counterforce.

It is necessary in conflict to eliminate force from the resolution process. Any behaviour (whether physical or verbal) can be termed as force if the net result is

¹Ibid. , 70.

coercion. The absence of force diminishes another person's compulsion to use force. The spirit of "come let us reason together" is encouraged.¹

- b. Problem-solving communication focuses on the problem not on the persons.

The concern is to resolve issues, not to make an opponent look bad. Nor is there an attempt to resolve issues by making an opponent to look bad; that will only create a new problem.² Although persons are inevitably related to or responsible for a problem, they will work more cooperatively to resolve the problem when not preoccupied with defending themselves. Any comment or action that triggers the other person's defence mechanism creates a new agenda for that person: self-defence. This naturally distracts from the real business at hand, which is solving the problem. So all threats and insults should be left out of the conversation. Focusing on the problem makes the opponent feel comfortable. It casts a person as a partner rather than as an adversary.³

- c. Problem-solving communication focuses on oneself not on the other

It makes heavy use of "I" messages and steers away from "you" messages. It reports on what the speaker is feeling, thinking, or desiring.⁴ It avoids the mistake of accusing the listener, either of which is detrimental to conflict solving, since they too would place the opponent on the defensive. "I" messages avoid two other common sins of "you" messages: attempt to trap or to threaten. "I" messages allow us to state

¹Ibid. , 70-71.

²Huttenlocker, 71.

³Shawchuck, Norman. *How To Manage Conflict in the Church*, Vol. 1, (Leith, ND: Spiritual Growth Resources Press. 1983), 32.

⁴Huttenlocker, 71.

our perspective, but also to own complicity in the problem, an essential ingredient to conflict resolution. “I” message disarms. “You” messages arm. Disarmament is the goal.

- d. Problem-solving communication focuses on alternatives, not arguments.

It speaks of “a more excellent way” and suggests future behaviour rather than belabouring past patterns. It employs positive rather than negative reinforcement. It extends hope rather than judgment.

The three R’s of “I” messages are:¹

- Recognize (the problem, including our complicity),
- Report (our distress, whether anger, or pain or something else).²
- Request (changes in conditions or another’s conduct).

The better our grades in the three R’s, the greater the likelihood of solving the problem.

Debates are inherent in every conflict. Debates are not wrong in themselves; they are a necessary device in decision making. They become divisive only when we depart from good communication. We should always try to avoid overstated messages, understated messages and unrelated messages. Likewise we should avoid sleight-of-hand (cunning) messages and underhanded messages and heavy-handed (oppressive) messages.

There are few conflicts in church that cannot be resolved when those involved master good communication. When we can use communication to make it part of the

¹Ibid.

²Ibid. , 72.

solution instead of part of the problem, all relationships in church acquire greater authenticity and deeper intimacy. When someone asks, “can we talk?” it is vital to be not only willing, but able.

Creative conflict resolution entails the exercise of skills as well as practice of charity in every confrontation. Table 1 shows communication examples of how to exercise good communication skills and caring in confrontation.

Table 1. Communication Examples of How to Address Critical Issues

It is okay to ____	It is not okay to ____
Confront	Condemn
“I find it difficult when you.....”	“You have absolutely no business.....”
Content	Contrive
To set forth one’s opinion clearly	To line up political support for one’s position
Disagree	Discredit
“I see it rather differently from that.”	“That is a stupid idea that will never work.”
Accentuate	Exaggerate
“This is a major concern to me....”	“This is the worst thing I can imagine”
Indicate	Dictate
“I can live with (this) and not (that).”	“You either (this) or (that).”
Express	Place blame
State the facts that document the existence of a problem	To make generalization that implicitly or explicitly indict another
Request	Demand
“May I ask that in future you...?”	“I am telling you that from now on you had better...”

Confess injury	Inflict guilt
Relate on an event or remark that cause pain	Induce shame on another for his or her conduct or words

Suggested Solutions to Personality-Centred and Principle-Centred Conflict

For personality-centred conflict, the opposing sides need to learn to coexist though they may never develop strong, positive relationships. They can admit their problems to one another and work towards toward mutual respect.¹

People involved in principle-centred conflict can also coexist. It will be also imperative for them to set the disturbing principle or issue in context. Whatever divides them usually need not become larger than what unites them. Paul did advise Euodia and Syntyche in Philippians 4:2-3:

“I beseech Euodias, and beseech Syntyche, that they be of the same mind in the Lord. And I intreat thee also, true yokefellow, help those women which laboured with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and with other my fellow labourers, whose names are in the book of life.”

They must value the unity of the congregation more than their personal points of view, and they must value their relationship more than their vain pride. The likelihood of an acceptable resolution of conflict will depend on everyone’s willingness to work toward some mutual acceptable middle ground.

Steps to Conflict Resolution

Because of the complexity of the church conflict, the issues and the feelings involved, conflict resolution is not accomplished simply or easily. Typically it

¹Ibid. , 91.

requires adherence to a deliberate and highly sensitive process. The mediator, a mediator is valuable,¹ may find it advantageous to follow this steps:

¹Li-Jun Wang, "Relationships among Teacher Support, Peer Conflict Resolution, and School Emotional Experiences in Adolescents from Shanghai" *Social Behavior & Personality: An International Journal* 2014, Vol. 42 Issue 1, 99-113, accessed 12 Feb 2015, <https://library.macewan.ca/library-search/detailed-view/s3h/94509323?query=%28Gu%2C+Hai-gen%29>.

Investigative Interview

Church conflict presumes the existence of at least two opposing parties. Each has its own grievances and its own perspective on the situation. Hence, the peacemaker will arrange to meet privately and informally with each opposing party.¹ The purpose of this meeting is simply to *listen—empathetically* and *impartially*. Out of this meetings the peace-maker seeks to build trust with all parties and to construct a holistic view of the situation.

Problem Stating Meeting

Since each opposing party has its own perception of the problem, it follows that each one also has its own proposed solution. Given different understandings of the problem, it is inevitable that there will be a disagreement over which solution is the best. Therefore, before any attempts at a solution is made there must first come to both sides some common understanding of the problem. The problem stating meeting² brings together three representatives from each opposing party with whom the peacemaker will work in attempt to arrive at agreement on major points of contention. There will be no attempt to assign guilt, only a readiness to mutually own existence of the problem. Together with the peace-maker, these representatives will establish the issues to be discussed in the conflict resolution meeting.

Conflict Resolution Meeting

Any decision regarding conflict resolution must ultimately be made by the duly elected officers of the congregation. Thus a conflict resolution meeting will

¹Henry, 176-190.

²Ibid.

involve all members of the church council or some other duly constituted and authoritative body. During the meeting, the peace-maker will present the major points of the contention as determined by the problem stating meeting. The peacemaker will then attempt to lead the discussion aimed toward arriving at a course of action satisfactory to both sides.¹

When a congregation has been annihilated because of disaffection with or oppression by the pastor so that the church council or other boards and committees of the church do not adequately represent the true congregation, the peacemaker may find it necessary to consult other persons besides those formally in office. Their moral rights and personal feelings will need to be considered during the conflict resolution meeting. However, under these unusual circumstances it is imperative that the peacemaker does not sacrifice his position of impartiality. In cases where no consensus can be reached, the peacemaker has no remedy except to offer personal written recommendations, promising to do so within two weeks after the conflict resolution meeting.

¹Huttenlocker, 107.

CHAPTER 3

DESCRIPTION OF THE LOCAL SETTING

This chapter outlines the setting of the republic of Kenya, Central Kenya Conference of Seventh-day Adventist church, and that of Seventh-day Adventist Church, Dandora Terminus.

Setting of the Republic of Kenya

The republic of Kenya is a country in East Africa right on the Equator. She has the Indian Ocean bordering her on the South-East, Tanzania on the south, Uganda on her West South Sudan on her North-West Ethiopia on her North and Somalia on her North-East. She has a land area of 581,309 km² (224,445 sq. mi), and a population of approximately 45 million people in July 2014. Her capital and largest city is Nairobi.¹ See map C1 in appendix C.

Local Setting of Central Kenya Conference

Central Kenya is located in the central part of the republic of Kenya. In the current constitution it covers Marsabit, Isiolo, TharakaNithi, Meru, Embu, KituiMachakos, Makueni, Nyeri, Kirinyaga, Muranga, Kiambu, Nairobi and Kajiado counties.² The conference has her administrative offices in Nairobi city Nairobi

¹Central Intelligence Agency (2012). "Kenya" *The World Factbook*. Retrieved 28 May 2013.

²See Kenya Counties Map on Page 133.

County. Dandora Terminus Seventh-day Adventist Church is in Nairobi station, Central Kenya Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Historical Background Of, Dandora Terminus SDA Church

Seventh-day Adventist Church, Dandora Terminus is located in the Dandora, an eastern suburb in Nairobi (Map C2 in Appendix C), Kenya. It is part of the Embakasi north sub county of the larger Nairobi County. Dandora estate was established in 1977, with partial financing by the World Bank in order to offer higher standard of housing. However, the estate has turned into a high-density slum with high unemployment. Nairobi's principal dumping site is situated in Dandora, probably causing health problems for local residents.¹Dandora is divided into five phases. Seventh-day Adventist Church, Dandora Terminus is in phase five of the larger Dandora adjacent to Dandora phase five Market and the Terminus bus stage for Nairobi city centre– Dandora bus route.² See map C3, Appendix C.

Seventh-day Adventist Church, Dandora Terminus started as a Sabbath school of Seventh-day Adventist Church, Dandora Central in 1998 and was organized into a church in 2000. It is on a ½ acre piece of land. Its membership as of the end of September 2014 was 675 in the church register but receives in attendance a congregation of 2000 members every Sabbath.

The participants in this research were 100 members consisting of 2 (10-15 years), 5 (16-21 years), 8 (22-35 years) 76 (35 years and above years 38 members of each opposing party) and 9 elders of the church.

¹“Dandora,” Wikipedia, accessed 19 March 2014, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dandora>.

²See Dandora Map on page 135.

Analysis of Presence of Conflict

Until a person admits that he has a problem, he or she may not seek for a solution. The research therefore began with finding out whether there was indeed conflict at Dandora SDA Church or not to justify the conflict resolution exercise especial to those who were in denial or ignorant about it. To do this, a survey table (table C1 in the appendix) was used. Table 2 shows the respondents observations on the conflict presence.

KEY: 1. I strongly disagree 2. I disagree 3. I agree 4. I strongly agree

Table 2. Presence of Conflict Analysis

QUESTION	1	2	3	4
1 Our Local church here is entangled in a conflict	4%	9%	60%	27%
2 The conflict is hurting the church	8%	7%	45%	30%
3 There are members who are wounded by this conflict	4%	11%	45%	40%
4 I am also wounded by this conflict.	15%	30%	40%	15%
5 Am troubled and concerned that a conflict can be in such a supposedly good place like a church.	18%	21%	32%	29%
6 I know the causes of this conflict.	23%	33%	32%	12%
7 I do not know the causes of this conflict.	19%	38%	25%	18%
8 It is my desire to know causes of, the effect of, how to avoid, and how to resolve conflict.	4%	8%	22%	66%
9 I would like to see this conflict resolved	4%	7%	22%	67%
1 The conflict is too insignificant to bother me	17%	20%	33%	30%
0				

Table 2 shows that majority (87%) agreed that there was conflict in Dandora Terminus SDA Church. Further, 55% agreed that it was not only hurting the church but even them themselves and it was their desire to see it resolved.

Conflict and everything that comes and goes with it is a concern of both male and female. Figure 1 shows the gender ration of the research respondents.

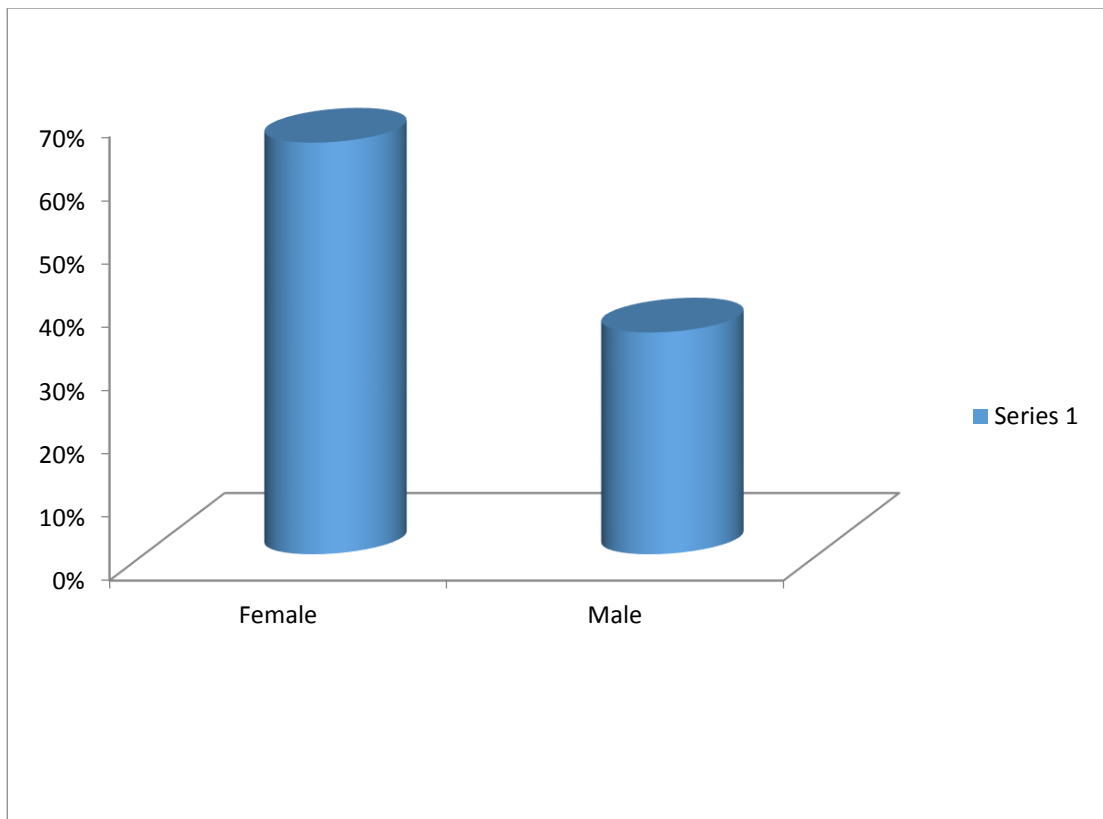


Figure 1. Gender of Respondents

Figure 1 shows that majority (65%) respondents are female unlike men who were 35%. Figure 1 shows that majority of members of Dandora Terminus SDA are female.

Conflict and all that is involved with it is a concern of all ages. Figure 2 shows respondents age parity. Figure 2 shows the ages of the respondents as: Pathfinders 10-15 years (2%), Ambassadors 16-21 years (3%), Youth 22-35 years (8%), and Adults 35 years and above (87%). Figure 2 shows that most respondents were adult.

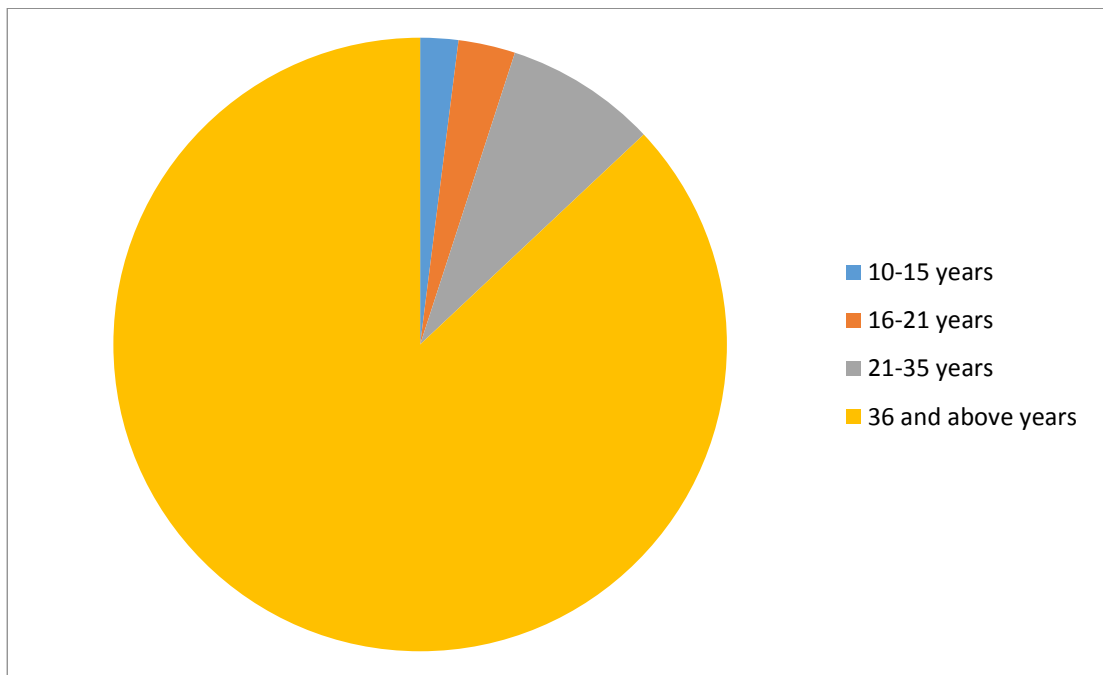


Figure 2. Ages of the Respondents

Conflict and its issues is a concern of all marital status, so was it at Dandora Terminus SDA Church. Figure 3 shows the marital status of respondents. Figure 3 shows that the marital status of respondents was: Figure 3 shows most respondents were married people.

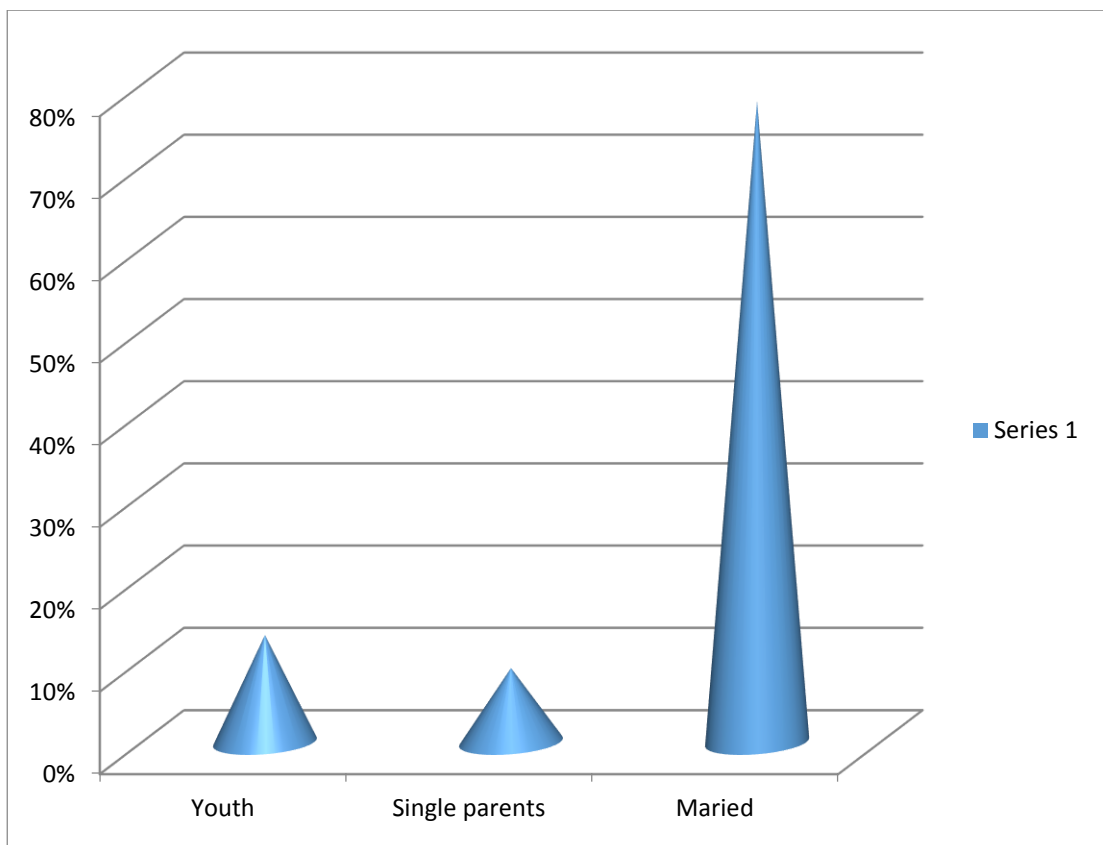


Figure 3: Marital Status of the Respondents

As noted in the theoretical foundations of this study, education level of a people has a bearing to their conflict-proneness or not. Figure 4 shows the education levels of the respondents. Figure 4 shows the education levels of respondents in the research. The majority (55%) of the members of the church have Secondary school education and below and are therefore prone to conflict as seen in the theoretical foundation of the study.

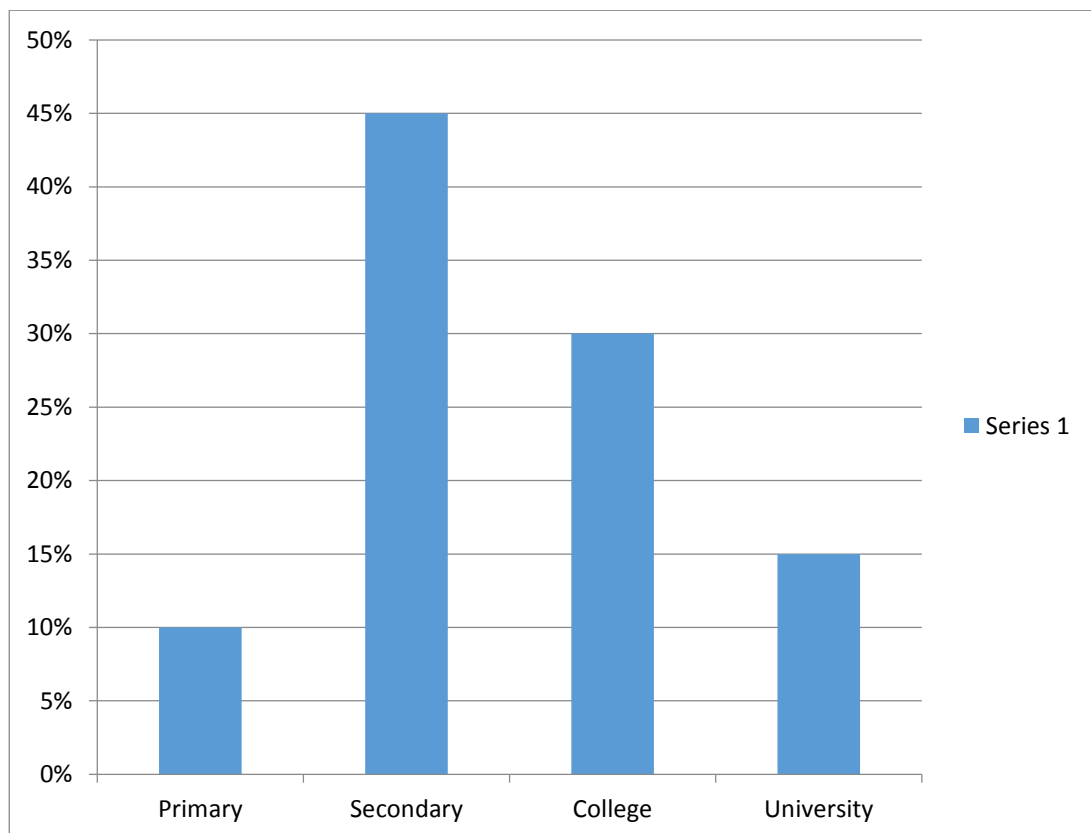


Figure 4. The Education Levels of Respondents

Among the many things that conflict does is to destroy a onetime otherwise good relationship as in Appendix B. Evidence of a destroyed relationship is usually varied but noticeable. Figure 5 shows the respondents response on the relationship between the opposing parties at Dandora Terminus SDA Church.

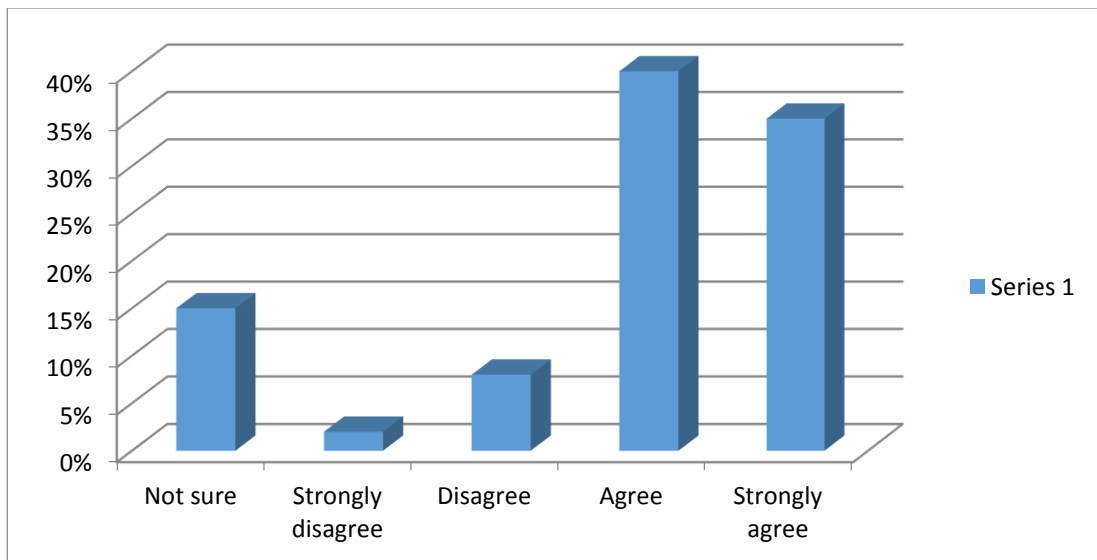


Figure 5. Members of Opposing Parties Didn't Greet Each Other

Figure 5 shows the respondents opinion on whether members didn't greet each other. Figure 5 shows that majority (75%) responds agreed that members of opposing parties did greet each other.

While the researcher found out that certain members of Dandora Terminus didn't greet each other it was not obvious that their reason for not greeting each other was the conflict in the church. Figure 6 shows the respondents observations on why those said members didn't greet each other.

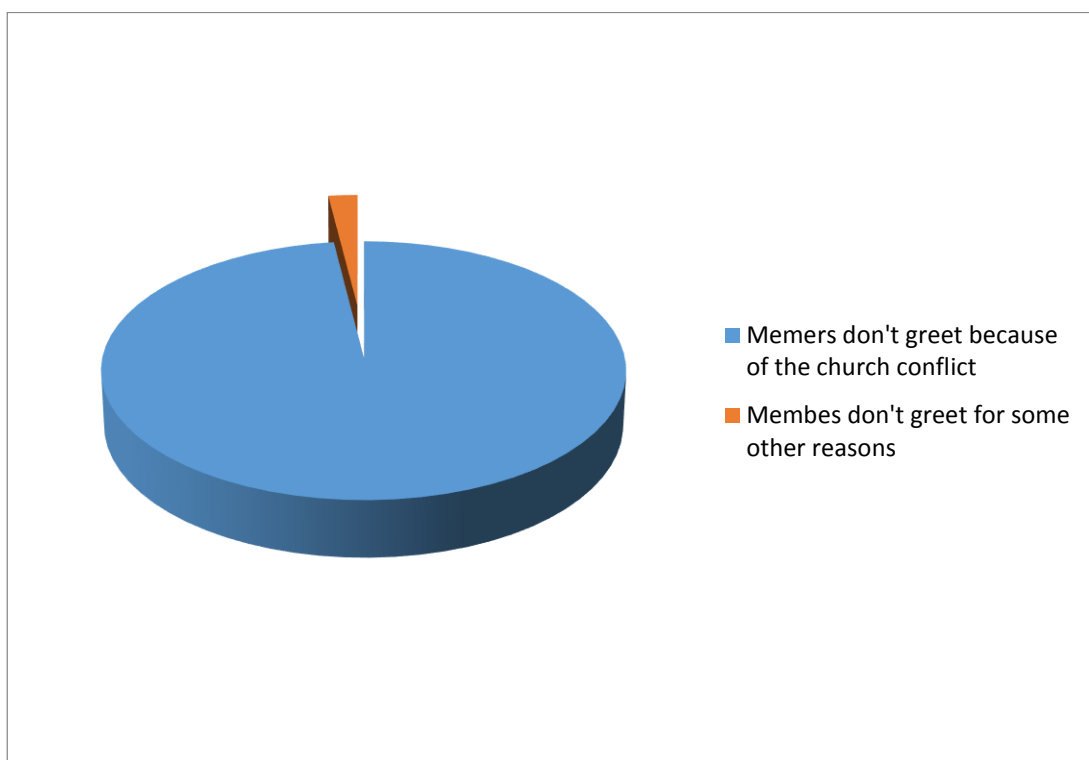


Figure 6. Why Members Do not Greet

Figure 6 shows that majority (98%) members of opposing parties didn't greet because of the church conflict destroy relationship. A church whose members'

relationship is bad due to conflict needs to have the conflict resolve and the relationship healed for her to carry out her mandate effectively.

Much as conflict is a concern of everybody wherever it happens it is a concern more to leader in that particular place. Figure 7 shows leaders and none leaders respondents response of their experience with the conflict in Dandora Terminus SDA Church. Figure 7 shows that most leaders (90%) got hurt in conflict

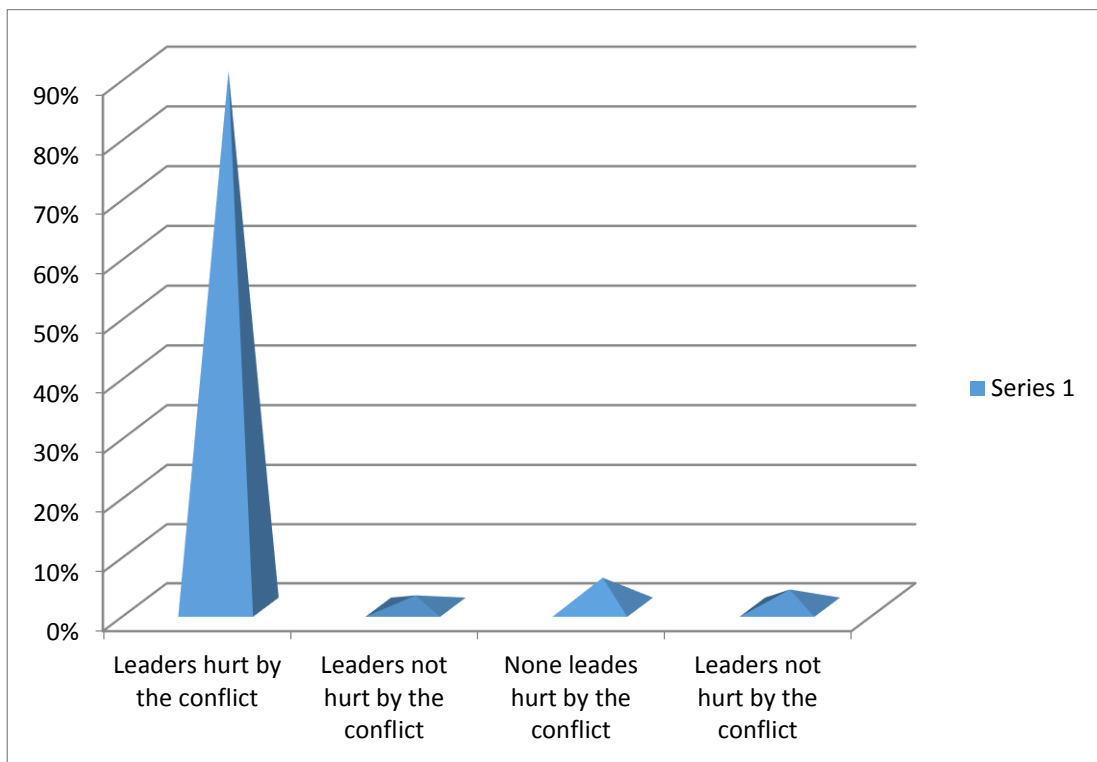


Figure 7. Most Leaders Hurt in Conflict

A physician investigating the cause of a disease first if he has to adequately treat it, so it is also with conflict. To resolve it requires knowledge of its cause. Figure 8 shows issues considered by respondents as causing conflict in Dandora Terminus SDA Church. Figure 8 shows the highest cause of conflict at Dandora Terminus SDA Church to have been closed power system, community change and antagonist respectively.

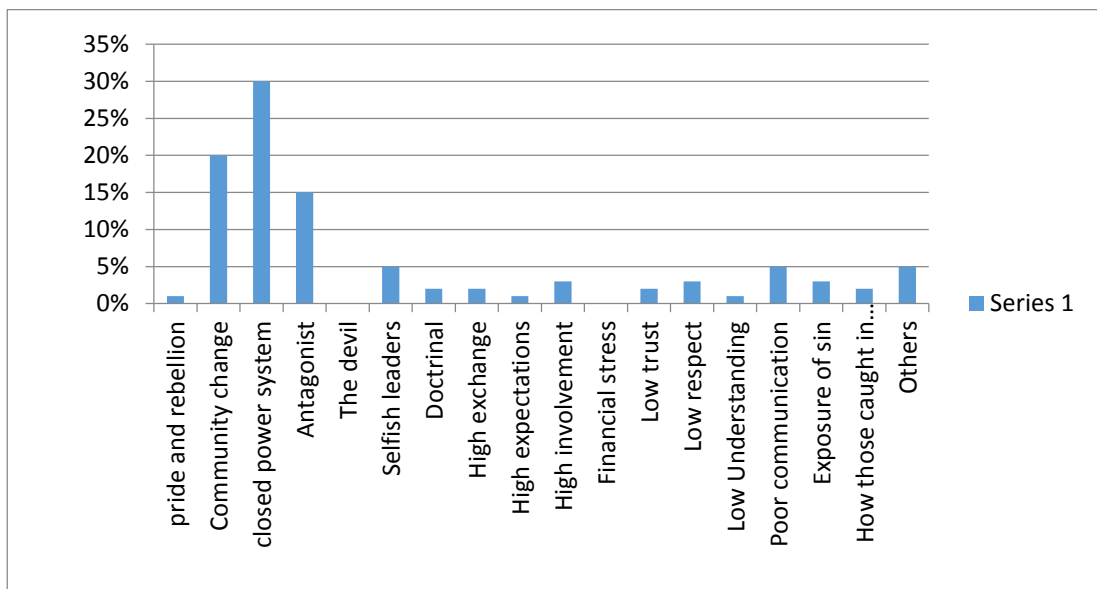


Figure 8. Causes of Conflict

CHAPTER 4

STRATEGY DESIGN, IMPLIMENTATION AND EVALUATION

Strategy Design

Lewis Douglass says a long-time friend of his who introduced him to some principles of conflict resolution uses an illustration to describe the process. He says that becoming an effective manager or resolver of conflict is similar to becoming an artist. The artist must first learn to mix the paints, then come to understand which mixture produces which colours, and finally learn brush strokes for applying the paint on the canvas. Only after the artist masters the paint mixing and fundamental strokes does he or she become free from the basic mechanics. Persons who become artists in creative conflict resolution must first master the basics and so integrate them in their attitudes and action to be able to use them creatively in a variety of conflict situations.¹

The following are principles, which have evolved from this research on conflict resolution. They are the paint, brushes and canvas of conflict resolution art employed for conflict resolution at Seventh-day Adventist Church Dandora Terminus.

¹Lewis, 4.

1. Run conflict resolution seminar.

Hold an eight days seminar on conflict resolution with congregation's leaders, specially identified leader of opposing sides and members of the congregation who were willing to attend it as it is also suggested by Lott.¹ The purpose of the seminar:

- a. Reduce tension in the congregation
- b. Develop conflict resolution skills among the leaders and the members of the congregation to help in resolving the apparent conflict and any future conflict.

2. Investigative interview

Run investigative interview since church conflict usually presumes the existence of at least two opposing parties. Usually each opposing party has its own grievances and its own perspective on the situation. The meeting between the researcher as a peace maker to be private and informal with each opposing party. The purpose of this meeting is simply to listen – empathetically and impartially. The researcher as peace-maker, to seek to build trust with all parties and to construct a holistic view of the situation.

3. Problem stating meeting.

- a. The meeting provides opportunity for the opposing sides to raise their grievances with each other.
- b. This meeting is also held to secure willingness to work on the problem together. When a conflict occurs, it is hardly just caused with only one side of the opposing side. Both sides are usually responsible, no side is to bear all the guilt or responsibility alone and neither is responsible for improving the matters all alone. It follows therefore, that if a resolution out of the conflict is

¹Lott, 2.

to be arrived at, both sides should demonstrate willingness to work on the conflict resolution.

4. Wise and kind confrontation a must if there is to be conflict resolution

Jesus in Matthew 18:15-17 and Paul to Titus, encourages that in the event of a conflict, there is need, especially of the offended, to confront the perceived offender.¹

Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as a heathen man and a publican. (Matthew 18: 15-17)

A man that is a heretic after the first and second admonition reject: Knowing that he that is such is subverted, and sinneth, being condemned of himself. (Titus 3:10-11)

For conflict resolution to happen, confrontation is unavoidable, but what needs to be avoided is the unkind and unwise confrontation. Conflict does not actually divide us but our failure to respect one another in conflict is what divides us. Therefore the alleged offended party is to confront the alleged offending side with a confrontation that is accompanied with caring.²

Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such a one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted (Galatians 6:1)

5. Feelings must be handled first along with the real causes of the conflict.

In the process of dealing with the feeling it needs to be remembered that personality-centred conflicts usually evoke hurt and hate feelings. Where as in the study it emerged clear that principle-centred conflict are easier to handle because they may not be accompanied with hurt and hate feelings, it is also true that even principle-

¹<http://www.gotquestions.org/church-conflict.html>. (20/3/2014).

²Huttenlocker, 63.

centred conflict may evoke considerable feelings. Initially, there is not usually a dislike for the other person(s) but it frequently develops. The conflict then takes on the appearance of being personality-centred. At that point resolution becomes complicated because the feelings must be handled along with the real issue causing conflict. It follows therefore that conflict will usually be more effectively resolved by beginning first at dealing with the feelings and work backwards toward the issues.¹

6. Help others feel better about themselves

By affirming others, by in-depth listening to others, taking seriously the goal of others as significant to them, look for and appreciate the strength and gifts of others.

7. Discourage giving false information or impression.

Discourage overstated, understated and unrelated messages, this leads to misdiagnosis of the real cause, delays, complicate or misdirects resolution efforts.

8. Strive for effective communication.

Communication that leads to conflict resolution is respectful to the opponent(s), admits the communicator's contribution to the conflict, attempts not to trap or threaten and it disarms the alleged opponents.² It is not enough to talk but to be able to talk well in the effort to resolve conflict.

9. Examine and filter assumption or truthfulness.

Untruthfulness leads to wrong diagnosis of the problem if not to misplaced response.

10. Identify the real cause (s) of the conflict.

¹Huttenlocker, 88.

²Ibid. , 71.

It is only in knowing the cause of a problem that rooting out the problem can be appropriately possible.

11. Identified causes of the conflict to be addressed and dealt with each individually

During conflict resolving discursions, many causes usually come up, some even interrelated, dealing with more than one at a time tends to confuse the process and may open the way for one problem to be cited as an excuse for another or to direct attention away from the other.

12. Conflict resolution at either guilty, anxiety or frustration stage

Carry out conflict resolution at either guilty, anxiety or frustration stage; and not at anger and exodus stage because the anger is still too fresh to forgive and too close to view objectively. Conflict resolution unlikely at exodus stage.

13. Mentality of conflict to give way to caring

Help the parties in the conflict resolution strategy to shun the difficulty in conflict resolution that is occasioned by the Survival Response in conflict (the mentality of conflict –resorting to personality attack, use of unethical and immoral means to propagate self-righteousness and at the same time attacking, demonizing and demeaning the opponent).¹ Mentality of conflict to give way to caring.²

Insisting that integrity is maintained because it is essential in trust building.

Help those on both sides of conflict to appreciate that the price of conflict resolution is among other things, sacrifice. Those on both sides must relinquish pride, the claims of omniscience, some personal rights, the mask of self-righteousness and the compulsion to serve Christ Church by our own effort. This is a lot to give away but it

¹Ibid. , 25.

²Ibid.

is the way to redeem one's opponents. This is mentality of conflict giving way to caring.¹

Strategy Implementation

Strategy was implemented as follows:

1. I carried out a survey as in appendix B to certify the existence of the conflict and the result showed that indeed there was a conflict between two opposing parties in the church and that members were going to be happy getting it resolved as showed therein.
2. Conflict resolution seminar was conducted from 20th -27th September 2014.

The researcher carried out conflict resolution seminar to equip the church's leader, opposing side and the rest of the membership with information: the reality of conflict, what causes it, and how to resolve it. The purpose of the seminar was to help the participating parties to appreciate things that are required if there is to be conflict resolution and this way make the resolution exercise easier.

The seminar modules covered are in chapter two of this project and are as follows:

- i. 20th Sept. 2014 Introduction to conflict: definition, effect benefits and reality of conflict.
- ii. 21st Sept.2014 Causes of conflict part I: Pride and rebellion, exposure of sin, the way those found in sin is handled, egocentric leaders, the devil, and antagonist and a workshop.

¹Ibid. , 27.

iii. 22nd Sept 2014 Causes of conflict continuation: Conflict-prone

Churches (High exchange, High expectation, High involvement extra and a workshop

iv. 23rd Sept 2014 Causes of Conflict Continuation: Variant

Dynamics (Community change, financial stress, closed power system, and prescriptive expectations) in Church Conflict and a workshop.

v. 24th Sept. 2014 Varieties of Conflict and Survival responses in conflict (systems of conflict) and a workshop on the same.

vi. 25th Sept. 2014 Ethics in conflict, approaches to conflict and a workshop on the same.

vii. 26th Sept. 2014 Resolving conflict together and trust building

viii. 27th Sept. 2014 Resolving conflict together and communication.

3. Investigative interview done on 24th and on the 25th September 2014 during the conflict resolution seminar week.

4. Problem stating meeting and 1st attempt to resolve the conflict was on the 28th September 2014.

Community change, closed power control system and antagonism were identified as the major causes of conflict at Seventh-day Adventist church, Dandora Terminus.

5. Conflict resolution meeting was on 4th October 2014.

The solution to community change, closed power system and antagonism as discoursed under the sub-topic resolving the conflict together were appreciated. Members of both opposing parties dropped self-righteousness, owned up responsibility to the conflict, repented of the hurt they caused others in the

conflict and committed to conflict resolution as covered in those solutions discussed in the sub-topic resolving the conflict together, especially sub-topics: community change, power control system, and antagonism.

6. Repentance, agreement and commitment were made.
 - Individual members in both sides of opposing parties repented of the hurt they caused members of the opposing party. Some members repented of their hurt to individual members of the opposite party.
 - Members in both opposing parties agreed to diminish what had brought the difference between them and not to diminish each other.
 - Members in both opposing parties committed to respect each other and not attack each other's personality as they work on their differences.

Strategy Evaluation

Monitoring the Strategy after the Conflict Resolution

The observation in the church after conflict resolution has been as follows

1. Tension between alleged opposing party is reduced
2. No member has left because of the conflict
3. The opposing party not in control of power are acknowledging and appreciating the good contribution made by the highly involved and in control of the church and this gesture is building a positive attitude between the previously contending sides.
4. Those in control of the church are slowly trusting the alleged opposing party and are beginning to share responsibilities with them.

5. Community change is accommodated: New active members are accommodated in leadership and their proposed new style of doing things is happily negotiated and appreciated accordingly.
6. Opposing side are overcoming falling victims of mentality of conflict (mask of self-righteousness and personality attack of the opponent), and are not allowing drive to survive to be the ultimate consideration-but redemption is. Jesus sacrifice on the cross served as an eternal reminder that Christians do not subscribe to worldly idea of always looking out for oneself.
7. Members in both opposing parties are relinquishing pride, the claims of omniscience, some personal rights, the mask of self-righteousness and the compulsion to serve Christ's Church by their own efforts. In short the members are co-operating with God in overcoming mentality of conflict and are becoming rather caring.
8. The opposing party that is in control of power are exercising power in transparency and accountability and is executing power with a lot of discretion. They restrain themselves from using their advantage of being in power to oppress the former alleged opposing party. They use their advantaged position of being in control of the church to serve some of the wishes of the alleged opposing party.
9. Efforts are made to avoid prescriptive expectations, and when some are very necessary they are mutually negotiated. And just as there is partnership in establishing them, there is partnership in fulfilling them.
10. The opposing party that is not in leadership has become positively active. Members if this opposing party had been inactive in disgust of their opponents taking over the church's leadership and especially because of the manner in

which they had accented to leadership. They have become active and even reactivated their singing group which had earlier been the church choir but which had since ceased to be. The reactivated singing group is 92% of the members of this opposing party. Before the conflict resolution, this opposing sides were bitter and critics of each other. After the conflict resolution the formerly opposing sides are working together. The opposing party which is in leadership and which was showing off to the opposing side and would talk them quiet, has ceased show offs and has become kind and accommodative to the former offending side.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

Chapter three reveals that there were a number of causes of conflict in Dandora Terminus SDA Church but the major cause was closed power system. The other two next significant causes of the conflict were community change and antagonist respectively. Conflict caused by closed power system and community change like the Dandora Terminus one can be resolved.

The resolution step discovered in theoretical foundation of this study actually work:

- i. Conflict resolution is successful at either the guilty, anxiety or frustration stage and hardly at anger or exodus stages of the emotion of conflict.
- ii. Conflict resolution begins with the opposing parties having to confronting each other on the issue (s) causing the conflict.
- iii. For that confrontation to bear good fruit it has to be wise and kind. Dirty fight of conflict to give way to caring.
- iv. For caring to come through, striving for effective communication is a must.
- v. Hurt feelings must be handled first along with the real causes.
- vi. After handling the hurt feelings in the conflict due diligence must be made to discourage giving false information or impression. False information or impression leads to wrong diagnosis of the cause of the conflict
- vii. Identified the real causes to be handled one at a time.

Chapter four is clear that the implementation could not be simplistic, cannot be rushed, but demands all due diligence to ensure that all parties are satisfied that their views are adequately heard and their wishes considered in the resolution.

Conclusion

The difficulty in conflict resolution is the Survival Response in conflict (the mentality of conflict –resorting to personality attack by use of unethical and immoral means to propagate self-righteousness and at the same time attacking, demonizing and demeaning the opponent. Conflict will always be easy to solve when we overcome the tendency to diminish opponents and instead diminish the problem causing the conflict.

Recommendations

We need never be embarrassed, because we disagree. We need to be embarrassed only if we fail to care; lack of caring is the fundamental nature of the difficulty in conflict resolution. It is not unbecoming to have difference. We need to accept that there will be differences in churches as there are everywhere else.

The researcher recommends this strategy of conflict resolution used for resolving conflict at Seventh-day Adventist Church Dandora Terminus for resolving any conflict between two people, groups of people in church and also in the secular world.

Local Church members and especially her leadership need training in conflict resolution. The local church to put the training in her calendar of events and provide a budget for it.

All pastors and other church workers, serving at whichever level of the church's stratum, need a training in conflict resolution. The church at those level to include that in its calendar of events and to provide a budget for that.

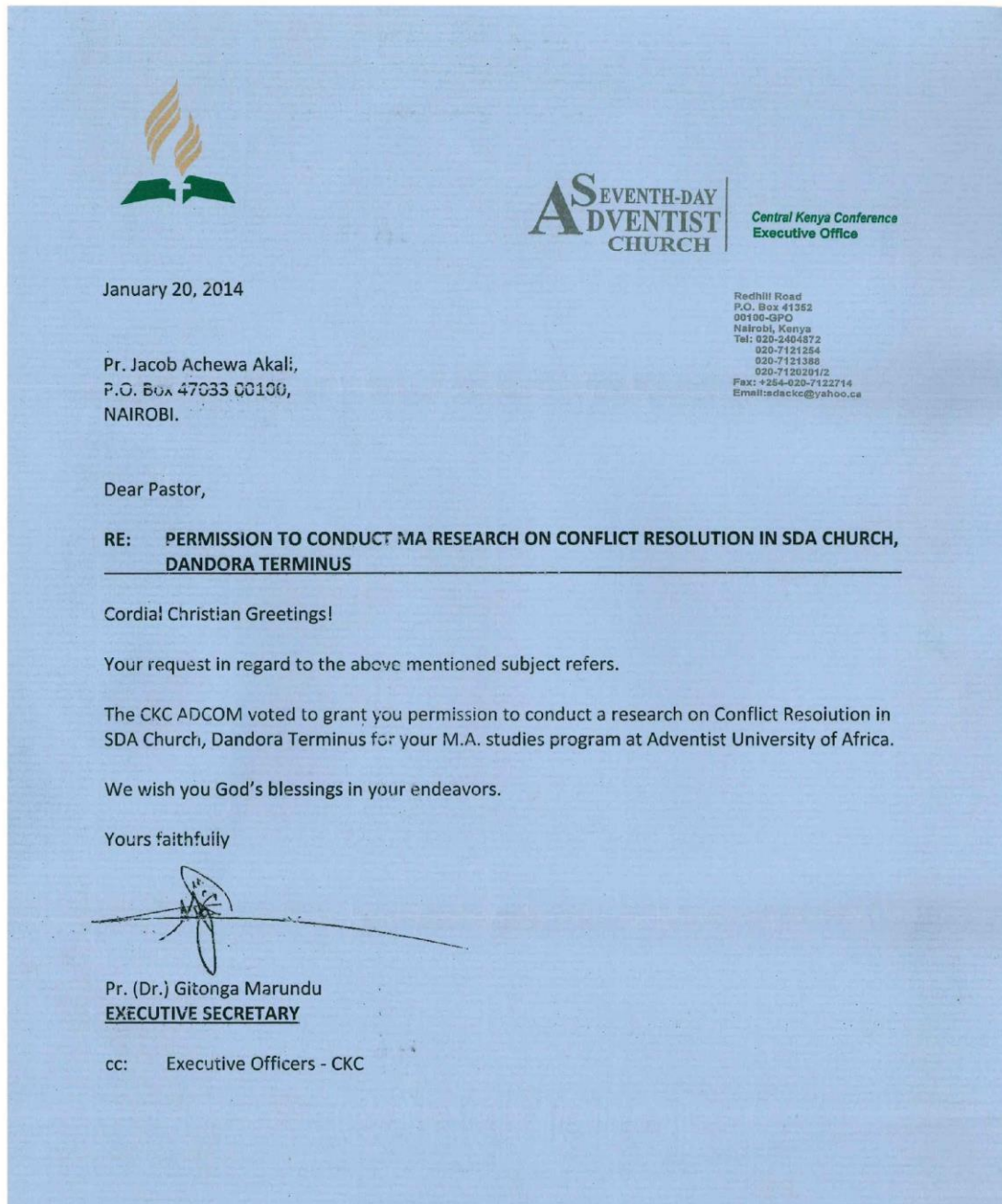
Any leader need a conflict resolution training. He needs to include it among the many things that he must acquire even if it means at a cost.

It has emerged, as result of this study that conflict has its benefits. Future study need explore this benefits. Future study need to make on how to turn conflict around to strengthen and energize the church.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

LETTERS





SEVENTH-DAY
ADVENTIST®
CHURCH

DANDORA TERMINUS CHURCH

Central Kenya Conference

Email: dt.terminus@gmail.com

P.O. Box 54594 - 00200

Nairobi-Kenya

3rd March, 2014

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

RE: PASTOR JACOB ACHEWA AKALI

Greetings in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Our Church board sitting on 2nd March 2014 under minute no. CB. 12/2014 passed a vote allowing Pastor Jacob Achewa Akali to use our church and its members in carrying out his Master's thesis on 'Conflict Resolutions'.

Yours in Christ,

James ONSONGO

Church Clerk

0722-840635



Cc: **Ps. Jacob AKALI** (0722-830375) - Dandora-Kayole District

APPENDIX B

TESTIMONY

A Member's Testimony on How Bad it Was During the Conflict

2014
Thursday 29
Week - 22 (149-236)

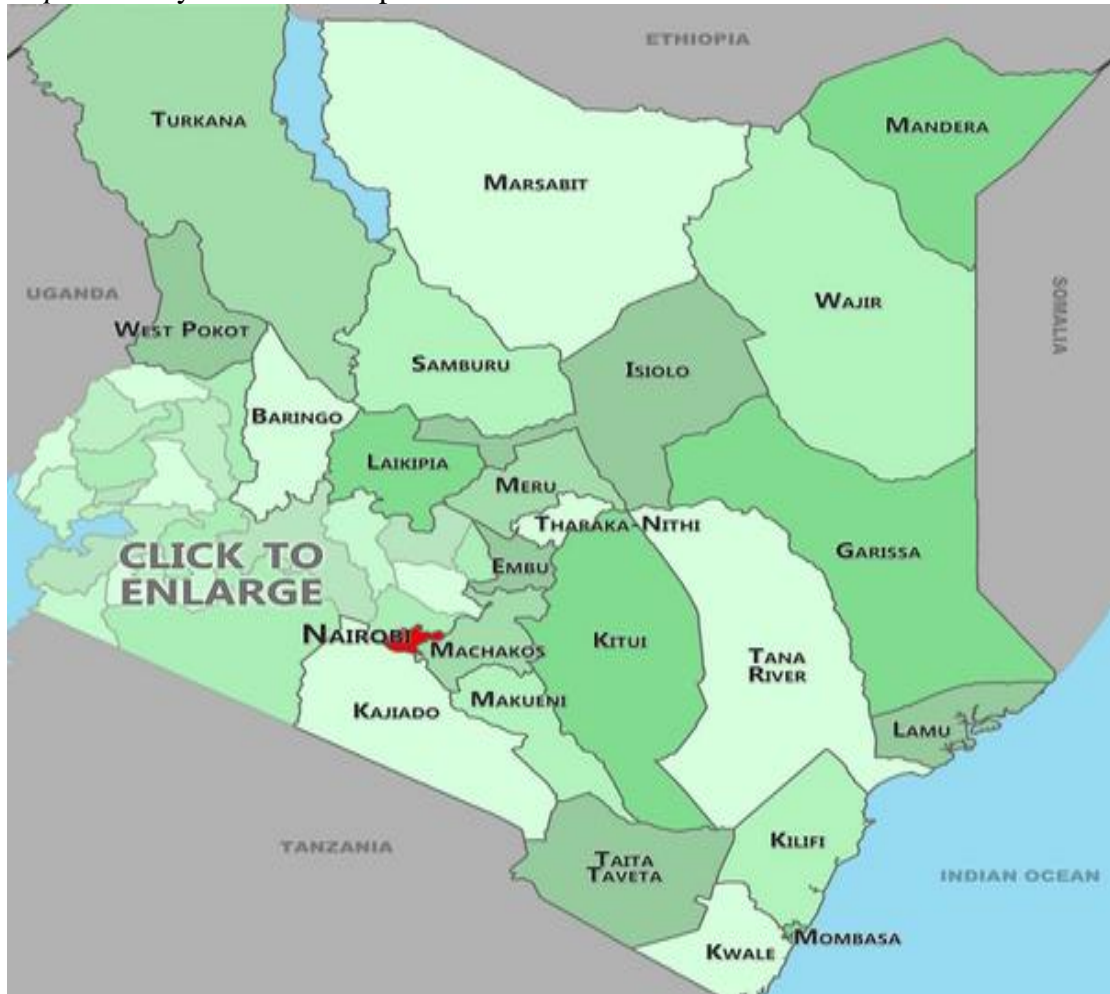
When there was a conflict in the church (ours) I never used to sleep. I was asking myself so many questions, as "Suppose God comes now" because there was no greeting one another. Most of the ^{night} hours used in praying.

Also I felt like moving from here to a different church because members became so rude to one another.

APPENDIX C

MAPS

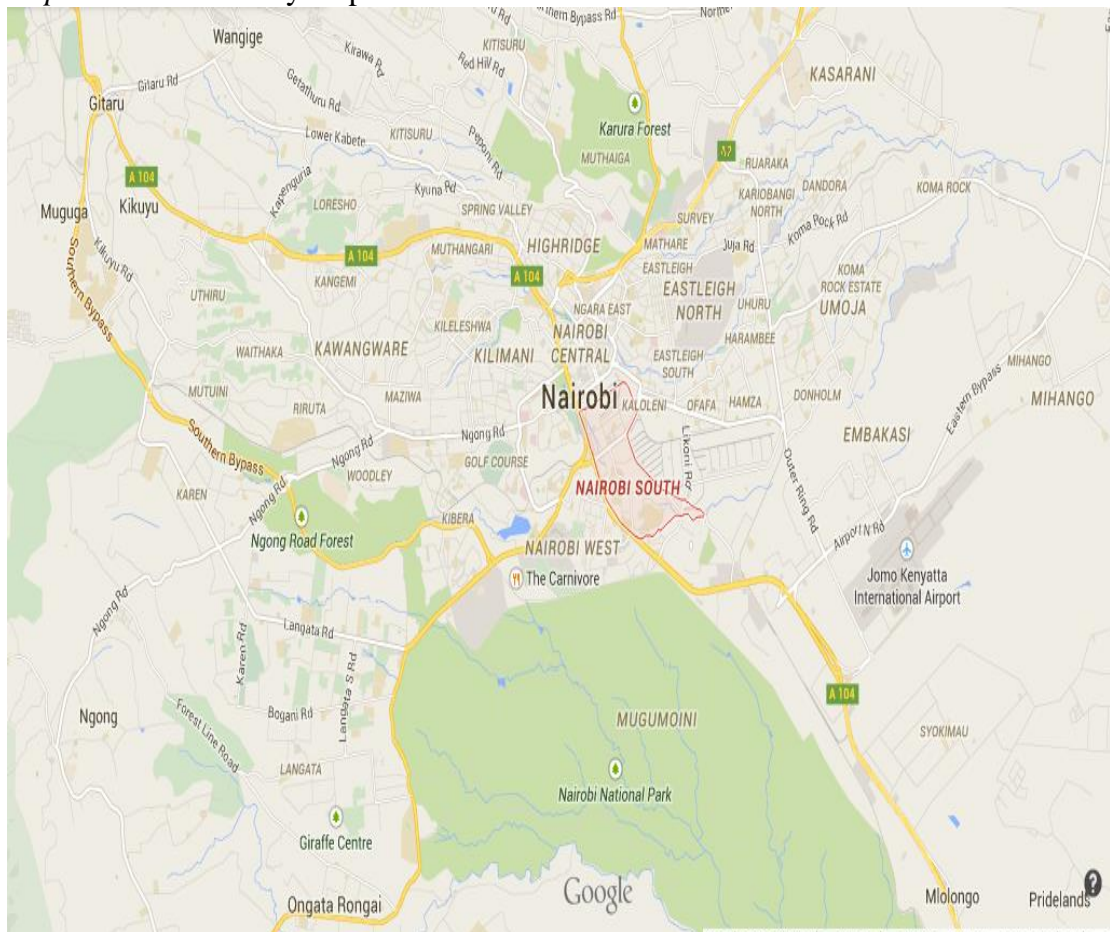
Map C1. Kenya Counties Map¹



Dandora Terminus SDA is found in Nairobi County

¹*Role of County Governments in Kenya,* accessed 20 January 2015, <http://ictville.com/2013/01/role-of-county-governments-in-kenya/>

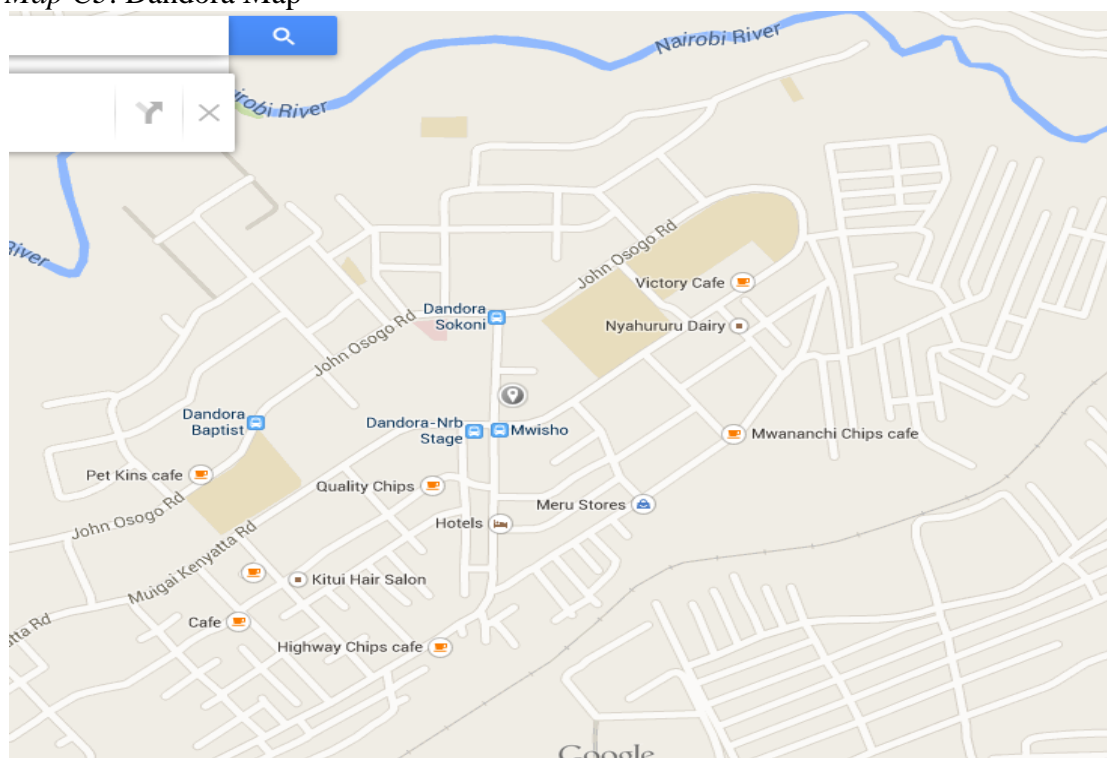
Map 2. Nairobi County map¹



Dandora Terminus SDA Church is found in the North-East part of Nairobi city.

¹“Nairobi Google Satellite Map,” accessed 20 January 2015, <http://www.maplandia.com/kenya/nairobi>.

Map C3. Dandora Map¹



Seventh-day Adventist Church, Dandora Terminus is at the marked place next to Dandora-Nairobi Stage (terminus of the Dandora-Nairobi city centre buses).

¹<http://www.maplandia.com/kenya/nairobi/places-bahati-dandora.html>. (21/1/2015).

APPENDIX D
INSTRUMENTS

The researcher carried out the survey below to confirm the presence of the conflict at the Seventh-day Adventist Church Dandora Terminus.

CONFLICT IN SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST, DANDORA TERMINUS
CHURCH SURVEY

Dear Respondent

This survey is part of a research at Adventist University of Africa. Kindly, respond to the following questions and statements as openly as possible. The data collected will only be used for academic purpose. The answers are strictly confidential. Please do not write your name

Answer by ticking in the box with the appropriate key no.

KEY: 1. I strongly disagree 2. I disagree 3. I agree 4. I strongly agree

Table CI: Conflict Presence Survey

QUESTION	1	2	3	4
1 Our Local church here is entangled in a conflict				
2 The conflict is hurting the church				
3 There are members who are wounded by this conflict				
4 I am also wounded by this conflict.				
5 Am troubled and concerned that a conflict can be in such a supposedly good place like a church.				

- 6 I know the causes of this conflict.
 - 7 I do not know the causes of this conflict.
 - 8 It is my desire to know causes of, the effect of, how to avoid, and how to resolve conflict.
 - 9 I would like to see this conflict resolved
 - 1 The conflict is too insignificant to bother me
 - 0
-

The researcher designed and used questionnaire (table D1) below to seek to understand of the magnitude of the conflict at Seventh-day Adventist Church Dandora Terminus whether it was:

- i. Indeed a church conflict or just personal differences.
- ii. Threatened the existence of the church or not or it was such that needed to be ignored
- iii. Who and what percentage of the church members held to whichever opinion

APPENDIX E
QUESTIONNAIRE

Dear Respondent

This questionnaire is part of a research at Adventist University of Africa.

Kindly, respond to the following questions and statements as openly as possible. The data collected will only be used for academic purposes the answers are strictly confidential. Please do not write your name

PART ONE

PERSONAL INFORMATION

KINDLY TICK IN THE BOX [] WHERE APPROPRIATE

1. SEX: Male [], female [].
2. AGE: 10-15[], 16-21[], 22-35 [], 35-50[], 50 & above []
3. MARITAL STATUS: Youth [], Married [], Separated [],
Divorced [], widowed []

EDUCATION STATUS: Basic [], Secondary [], College [] and University []

PART TWO

Magnitude of the Conflict at Seventh-day Adventist Church Dandora Terminus
questionnaire table

GENERAL OPENIONS

1–Disagree, 2-Strongly Disagree, 3-Agree, 4-Strongly Agree, 5–Not Sure

Table D1. Conflict Magnitude Questionnaire

Question	1	2	3	4	5
----------	---	---	---	---	---

-
- 1 There are members who do not greet each other because of the two opposing parties conflict in our church
 - 2 There are members who do not greet each other just for other personal reasons other than this conflict.
 - 3 The conflict between the opposing parties in our church has reached a critical stage and if not resolve there is soon going to be an exodus
 - 4 The conflict the two opposing parties in our church still is indeed but it not that severe to cause an exodus soon but later
 - 5 Indeed there is a conflict between two opposing parties in our church but it does not need to worry us, it is such that is normal in life
 - 6 Yes there was conflict that divided the church into two opposing parties but it is no more it ended
-

APPENDIX F

INTERVIEWS

The researcher used the interview below bellow to evaluate:

- i. The success of the conflict resolution seminar and the actual conflict resolution meeting.
- ii. The magnitude of those who were dropping animosity against the opposing group, those who were remorseful of what they did that had fuelled the conflict and who were requesting for forgiveness and were committing to doing right.
- iii. The researcher interviews members of both opposing sides the church leaders and members who were not in either of the opposing sides of all ages and gender to find out whether the ground for the conflict resolution was ready or if not to get it ready.

INTERVIEW
THE RESPONDENT PERSONAL INFORMATION

1. Gender: Male female
2. How long have you be a member of this Church Seventh-day Adventist Dandora

Terminus

- 0 – 1 Year
- 1 – 2 Years
- 3 – 5 Years
- 6 -10 Years
- Since its organization to date

3. Years of service to the church.

- 0 – 2 Years
- 0 – 4 Years
- 0 – 6 Years
- 0 – 8 Years
- 10 and more Years

4. Age:

- 1-10 Years
- 11-15 Years
- 15-2 Years
- 21-35 Years
- 35 and More Years

5. Singing in the church choir?

- Current church choir
- Former church choir
- Both
- None of the above

6. Following the conflict resolution seminar we have had.

- a) In your opinion what was the cause of the conflict

b) What hurt you in this conflict?

c) In your opinion, what hurt the members on the contrary side?

d) Do you feel you played a part in perpetuated this conflict

e) Are you remorseful and repentant of something you occasioned or did that fuelled the conflict?

f) Would you like to publicly admit and repent what you did that played a role in fuelling the conflict so that you can be to be forgiven?

g) What is it that you would like the members on the other side of conflict repent about and or commit to do better now and always.

APPENDIX G

MODULES

The conflict resolution seminar used at Dandora Terminus during her members' conflict resolution:

1. Introduction to conflict- definition, effect benefits and reality of conflict.
2. Causes of conflict art I-Pride and rebellion, antagonist, exposure of sin, the way those found in sin is handled, egocentric leaders, the devil, extra and a workshop.
3. Causes of conflict continuation-Conflict-prone Churches (High exchange, High expectation, High involvement extra and workshop.
4. Causes of conflict continuation-Variant Dynamics (Community change, closed power control system, Financial stress extra in Church Conflict and a workshop.
5. Varieties of Conflict: Principle and personality-centred conflict and systems of Conflict and a workshop on the same.
6. Ethics in conflict and Approaches to conflict and a workshop on the same.
7. Resolving conflict together part one-Pride and rebellion, exposure of sin extra and conflict prone churches solutions.
8. Resolving conflict together part two-Solutions to Variant dynamics in church conflict.

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Education

Dates.	Program	Institution
2010 – 2015	Master of Arts in Pastoral Theology	Adventist University of Africa
1993 – 2000	Bachelor of Theology	Bugema University
1988 – 1991	Secondary School	Shikunga Sec. Sch
1977 – 1987	Primary	ShiongoPri. Sch.

Work Experience

Dates	Title	Place
2001 – 2003	Githioro District of SDA Church	District Pastor
2004 – 2005	Rift Valley Adventist Sec. Sch.	Chaplain
2006	Nairobi Central SDA Church	Associate Pastor
2007 – 2008	Nairobi Central SDA Church	Senior Pastor
2009 –2010	Lavington District of SDA Church	District Pastor
2011	Nairobi South	Senior Pastor
2011-Now	Dandora/Kayole District of SDA Church	District Pastor